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CLAREMONT

REVIEW OF BOOKS

A Journal of Political Thought and Statesmanship

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BIG-GOVERNMENT CONSERVATISM?

by Charles R. Kesler

THE ERA OF BIG GOVERNMENT IS OVER." So President Bill Clinton assured us only a few years ago, in the full flush of retreat after the 1994 elections, which had handed over control of the House of Representatives to the Republicans for the first time in 40 years.

Now we begin to hear a contrary theme, issuing not from liberals but from conservative thinkers. "The great free-market revolution that began with... Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan... has finally reached its... point of reversal," writes Francis Fukuyama. "The conservatism that defined itself in reaction against the New Deal — minimal government conservatism — is dead," chimes in George Will. The quotable Marshall Wittman, who works at the Hudson Institute, argues that conservatism now "is headed in an entirely different direction" from its 1994 agenda of "eliminating agencies and scaling back government." "We are," he declares, "seeing the beginnings of big-government conservatism."

American conservatism *has* reached a turning point. For decades, the conservative movement was a coalition of traditionalists, neoconservatives, and libertarians, united by their antipathy to Soviet Communism and domestic radicalism. But as our common enemies have faded, so has our sense of purpose and identity. The brave movement that defined itself largely (though never completely) by what it was *against* now has to decide what it is *for*.

But this great, exhilarating challenge shouldn't be permitted to subside into a weary endorsement of the status quo. Acquiescing in the present size, scope, and ambition of the federal government would be the worst sort of fatalism masquerading as realism. September 11's attacks settled nothing on this score, except perhaps to discredit the most extreme forms of libertarian anti-statism. Wartime is, so *The Federalist* argued, always friendly to the national government because it is an occasion that calls for all of constitutional government's proper energy — especially executive-branch energy. War also elicits patriotism, which confirms that man is not by nature libertarian.

This particular war, however, has also forced the reopening of questions long considered unfashionable or closed. One is the question of good and evil, which President Bush has ringingly and rightly emphasized in his speeches. Another is the question of progress. The tallest modern buildings can be toppled by resolute men who despise, but are willing to use, technology for evil purposes. If the 20th century did not teach us this lesson, then the 21st century seems determined to: progress is not inevitable, and all material, political, and technological change must be measured

by moral standards that are not themselves a product of change.

Liberals as well as conservatives feel the new urgency of these questions. But conservatives are peculiarly poised to take advantage of them as an occasion to rethink the goodness or badness of the modern state and to doubt its claims to inevitability. It is true that, in wartime, domestic political reforms usually take a back seat to foreign policy. But woe unto the political movement that does not prepare for the vigorous resumption of domestic politics when the war is over or winding down. It was after World War II that full-blown socialism came to Britain. It was during the Vietnam War's shameful endgame (helped along by Watergate: foreign policy does not always end at the water's edge) that a liberal Congress enacted campaign-finance reforms, gutted the intelligence services, and tried to curtail the president's budgetary and war powers.

Fukuyama and Will are correct that the conservatives' and especially the Republicans' fight against Big Government was faltering long before September 11. Nonetheless, this doesn't prove that conservatives lack a cogent criticism of the modern state, much less that they don't need one. It proves only that the common libertarian critique, rooted in amoral freedom and the economist's view of human nature, has run its course. Libertarianism of this sort may continue to offer conservatives useful arguments but can no longer set the tone and agenda for our criticism of the modern state.

WHEN CONSERVATISM WAS A BELEAGUERED coalition, it was natural for libertarians to take the lead on this front, even as traditionalists tended to provide the arguments against the new morality (i.e., the old immorality) and its angels and archangels on the federal courts. But if conservatism is to remain vital, it must do better. The old libertarian bumper sticker captures the problem nicely: "There's no government like no government." Americans are not anarchists, and reject even anarchism's romance. So did the Founders, who stood for moral freedom and thus for limited, republican government. For them — and for us, if we would learn from them — Big Government is bad not so much because it is big and costly but because it is disordered and, in principle, unlimited.

The last thing America needs is for conservatives to make their peace with bad government. Better to look forward to a more principled and patriotic indictment of it as an insult to our rights, an offense against our equality, and a threat to our Constitution.

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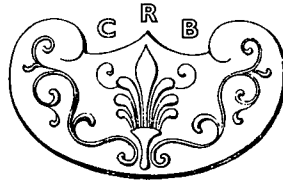
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THE UNBEARABLE LIGHTNESS OF BEING ALAN WOLFE

Moral Freedom: The Search for Virtue in a World of Choice, by Alan Wolfe.
W.W. Norton & Co., 246 pages, \$24.95

Book Review by Hadley Arkes

THE LATE PROFESSOR EDWARD WESTERMARCK cut his figure in the academy at the beginning of the last century, as an anthropologist arguing strenuously for the doctrine of "cultural relativism." He contended that there were no principles of right and wrong holding true in all places; that "moral" judgments will always be "relative" to the culture in which they are held. But Westermarck sought to restrain some of his overly zealous followers from giving even cultural relativism a bad name.

One of his apostles had argued that it was but a local prejudice to say that it was wrong to hold people blameworthy for acts they were powerless to affect. Westermarck came down on him severely. He insisted that moral judgments made sense only for those acts performed in the domain of freedom, where people were free to choose a course of action. Otherwise, it was hardly sensible to cast judgments on people — no more than it was plausible to blame the earth for revolving about the sun. Westermarck might have been a cultural relativist, but in order for cultural relativism to preserve its coherence as a doctrine, he thought it was utterly important to get clear on the properties that defined those acts stamped with a "moral" character. They might vary in their content from one place to another, but it was necessary to get clear in the first place on the "thing" that was varying in that way.

Westermarck proceeded then to correct his followers: The first thing to understand about moral judgments is that they were *binding*. If we said that it was *wrong* to torture infants, we meant that people were obliged to refrain from doing it. Or as Aquinas put it, the good was that which we were obliged to do; the bad was that which we were obliged to refrain from doing.

In the second place, said Westermarck, moral judgments were *impersonal* and *universal*. If we

came to the judgment that it was wrong for human beings to own other humans as slaves, and we asked then, *For whom was that wrong?*, the answer, coming back in a moral voice, would be: It was wrong for *anyone*, for *everyone* to own humans as slaves. And then finally, Westermarck pointed out that moral judgments applied only to acts of volition, not events "determined" by the laws of nature or by accidents. Even a dog, said Westermarck, knew the difference between being tripped over and being kicked. Summing up these features, Westermarck could mark off the ingredients that defined acts of "moral" significance, wherever they may be found, even in the most exotic places.

What seemed to elude this worldly man was that he had set in place the very logic of morals, as defined over the years by Aquinas, Kant, and others. And once those ingredients were in place, they formed the ground of moral truths that would indeed hold in all places, quite regardless of the cuisines or the local customs that differed from one so-called "culture" to another. Whether we were East or West, it was a necessary truth, bound up in the logic of morals itself, that "we do not hold people blameworthy for acts they were powerless to affect." If Smith had not been born at the time the crime was committed, we take that as powerful evidence for his "innocence" — powerful evidence, that is, that he is undeserving of punishment — whether he happens to be in Nairobi or Jersey City.

Now switch the scene: It is Amherst, Massachusetts, in the late 1980s. A young woman visits as a candidate for a job in the curious department called Women and Gender Studies. Reflecting, quite emphatically, the perspectives that come along with the field, this young woman denies that there is any such thing as an "essential human nature," holding

true in all places. As a self-proclaimed feminist, interested in the wrongs done to women, one would have thought that she was capable of identifying "women" in all parts of the world, as distinguished, say, from female dogs and giraffes. And that with an interest in the "wrongs" suffered by women, one would assume that she could recognize things whose *moral* wrongness could be identified in all cultures. And yet, this young doctoral candidate insisted that she could do no such thing; that her project would depend instead on painstaking work in the field. Since she could not identify the "universal woman," she could speak only of the "American woman"; and if she could go, in her field work, to Sierra Leone, she could "negotiate" a conversation that would establish a nexus between American Woman and Sierra Leone Woman. It was only by broadening the axis — with ever more fieldwork, ever more trips to exotic places — that the notion of the American-Sierra Leone Woman could be broadened to establish, say, American-Sierra Leone-Brazilian Woman.

It fell to some of us, not enthralled by the same theories, to deliver the news: She could mercifully spare herself the vast budget for travel, to say nothing of the trips, so taxing on the body, for her project was not, after all, an "empirical" project; it did not depend on collecting evidence in the field. In order to launch any such project, she would have to be able to tell the difference, in the first place, between a woman and a tree, or a woman and a rhinoceros. She would probably look first to the female of that species marked by Aristotle, those creatures who could not only emit sounds to indicate pleasure or pain, but give reasons over matters of right and wrong. If she could grasp those differences, she would have a decisive start in understanding the defining nature of "women" without the need to work for

years, collecting data in improbable places, well outside the reach of her American Express card.

IBOTHER TO SET THESE POINTS IN PLACE, because they provide the telling background for receiving that most curious new book by Professor Alan Wolfe, *Moral Freedom: The Search for Virtue in a World of Choice*. Wolfe is the director of the Boisi Center for Religion and American Public Life at Boston College, and in a long string of books, getting even longer as we sit, he has written on questions of moral and political controversy in the style of a sociologist. On the jacket of his book he is described as a "social scientist and public intellectual." He is a frequent contributor to *The New Republic*, and his previous book, *One Nation, After All*, was hailed by the *New York Times* as "a sober and valuable contribution to the debate about American divisions and values."

In this new work, Wolfe sets himself against some prominent conservative writers, such as Gertrude Himmelfarb and William Bennett, who have written in different ways about the corrosive effects of moral relativism in our time. Himmelfarb has famously set our own age against the moral rectitude of the Victorians, and insisted on the possibilities for "remoralizing" our society, either with a revival of religious conviction or with the simple move to start taking seriously again the notion of moral truths. Bennett has argued in a similar vein and made a rather prominent attempt to teach again, to a new generation, the story of classic virtues.

Wolfe wants to resist and rebut the arguments of the conservatives, and he would do it mainly along two paths: Through surveys carried out with samples of people in different parts of the country, and from different slices of our moral universe, he seeks to show that the American people have not really drifted into a state of moral dishevelment. He tries to show that the American people still strain over moral questions, though with evidently thinner resources of reflection, in religion and philosophy, than our people were able to summon 100 years ago. But Wolfe suggests, too, that they are straining over these questions with a different, and newer, understanding of "morality." They no longer credit, in the same degree, moral truths pronounced from on high, in the voice of authority.

MODERN AMERICANS HAVE BEEN thrown back on their own devices, in a moral world apparently far more complicated than the moral world of the past. Their moral constructions then are more

"personal," in the sense that they have had to apply principles to their own circumstances. The result is what Wolfe calls "moral freedom," an emancipation from the principles that restrained people in the past, most dramatically on matters of sexuality. This new moral freedom is so buoying or so exhilarating that, in Wolfe's estimate, there is no going back. This "moral freedom" promises to endure; or as Machiavelli might say, it is part of a new order of things.

Exactly what this "moral freedom" means is not quite as clear as Professor Wolfe seems to suppose, for it seems to have gone hand-in-hand with massive restrictions on private liberties, in the form of the freedom to honor private codes of conduct, and engage then in private discriminations, in all manner of private businesses and private clubs. Viewed from another angle, we find massive restrictions on moral freedom, from the freedom to smoke, to the freedom to arrange relations with employees in small firms and large corporations. But we may put that niggling matter aside for a moment. The most urgent news that needs to be conveyed to Professor Wolfe rather resembles the news conveyed to that aspiring professor in Women and Gender Studies, or to those wayward followers of Edward Westermarck: It may be critical for Professor Wolfe to learn that he really has here no "empirical study," which required elaborate, expensive field work. The surveys brought forth, after all, absolutely nothing novel or different in the "logic of morals" itself. In the end, Wolfe, his interviewers, and his subjects, had to presuppose the same understanding of morality that has ever been in place. Wolfe's respondents are often quite thoughtful, and they confirm at times a moral understanding that runs beyond the caricatures that Wolfe himself offers as constructions of moral principles. But nothing in their response indicates even the slightest shift in the essential properties that have ever defined "moral reasoning."

When the matter is viewed through this lens, it should become clear that the findings in the study simply do not sustain the conclusions announced with such flourish by Professor Wolfe. And indeed, in an exquisite twist, his study rather confirms an understanding strikingly at odds with his own: for what is revealed here is an understanding of morality *that remains essentially the same, even across changes in culture and time*, for it is bound up with a human nature that has remained strikingly the same. What seems to have evaded Professor Wolfe, as it evaded some of the followers of Edward Westermarck, is that this "nature" of human beings, or that enduring logic of "morals," forms the ground then of moral

judgments that will remain essentially the same in all places. The modern world will serve up different technologies and novel circumstances, but contrary to Professor Wolfe, nothing in the nature of moral judgment, or the principles of judging, has been altered in the modern world. The "moral freedom" he proclaims turns out then to be not especially novel, and not even so clearly good or desirable.

In a gentle move to embarrass the conservatives, with their constant prattling over "virtues," Wolfe asks the people in his survey to define, if they can, the meaning of "virtues" and "vices." It should not be surprising that most people, when confronted with that question, become a bit sheepish. But even ordinary folk, unburdened by academic degrees, will find it hard to repress the inclination, founded in their natures, to cast moral judgments — to praise and blame, commend and condemn. They cannot avoid, then, the temptation to keep pointing out the attributes that are better and worse. And so even though they are a bit shy about setting forth, with a philosophic weightiness, the meaning of virtues, the people in this sample reveal some rather emphatic judgments about the traits of character they regard as better or worse: They seem to think, for example, that bravery is better than cowardice, that prudence is better than recklessness, that generosity is better than miserliness.

WHEN THE SAME PEOPLE CAME TO the judgment that something stood in the class of a "wrong," then Aquinas's logic kicked right in: If smoking was thought to be hurtful, then people tended to think, as Wolfe reports, that "smoking is something that people ought not do." If they thought that Hitler, or serial murderers, were genuinely evil, they did not think that people of this kind ought to be rewarded, or celebrated, or held up to public esteem. As John Stuart Mill observed, drawing on the same logic, "we call any conduct wrong, or employ, instead, some other term of dislike or disparagement, according as we think that the person ought, or not, to be punished for it." In other words, people in the study did not suffer the least doubt about the essential logic of morals, regardless of whether they were confident about speaking of "virtues."

With the same moral sense, they resisted the notion that terms such as "lying" or "loyalty" or "forgiveness" could ever be translated into neutral formulas or rules, utterly cut off from substantive moral judgments. Every act of speaking falsely would not count as a "lie." A "lie" involves the act of speaking falsely for the purpose of inflicting

harm, perhaps by misleading or defrauding. No one would regard the Dutch householders as immoral when they refused to tell the Gestapo at the door of the Jews they were hiding. To tell the truth to the Nazis was to make oneself an accomplice in the killing of the innocent.

Wolfe's respondents had that common-sense grasp of the thing: They seemed to know, without much strain, that it is not a moral wrong if one refuses to inform one's father of the surprise party being planned for his birthday. As Wolfe aptly remarks, good character at times "means knowing when not to be fully honest." But surely Plato encompassed all of this in the *Republic*, when Socrates tests the question of whether justice inhered in always speaking the truth: Would we tell the truth to a friend we know to be deranged, or not in control of himself, when he asks us the whereabouts of a knife? Whether it is good or bad to tell the truth depends on the moral ends, which alone would establish whether the telling of truth, in the circumstances, is justified or unjustified. Wolfe reports on the reactions of his respondents as though they were exhibiting nuances, or complications, that bespoke a modern sensibility. In point of fact, they were simply reflecting the understanding that has ever come into play as soon as people reflect, in a morally demanding way, on whether it is always wrong to speak less than the truth.

The same thing could be said about every one of the other terms, or problems, that Wolfe takes up in the book. Wolfe offers a whole chapter, for example, on "forgiveness" as "the unappreciated virtue." Once again, he finds some surprising variations or nuances among his respondents, and once again he seems not to notice that his respondents, as functional people, are simply guided by the distinctions that have always been embedded in the logic of morals itself.

And so, while some people in the survey find something therapeutic in forgiving certain offenses, and letting go of certain angers, there is also a firm sense among the respondents that, in certain cases, justice will not permit forgiveness. In the case of a rapist or a serial murderer, there is a strong current of opinion among the respondents that certain offenses cannot simply be forgiven without making light of the offense and of the victims. In one instance, the recognition breaks through that forgiveness may not be warranted if a criminal has not repented or acknowledged the wrong of what he had done.

In all of these instances, then, what has the survey revealed? People of ordinary wit, asked to give their moral reactions to cases

and persons, bring forth a richness of response that rather confirms the sense that humans are indeed constituted, in their natures, as moral beings, who can give and understand reasons concerning matters of right and wrong. But their responses reveal nothing in the least new about the meaning, or the logic, of morality itself. Nor do they reveal anything novel in the range of considerations that come into play as people seek to apply principles of judgment to concrete cases. To deal with fraud in a newspaper or on the Internet, to deal with racial discrimination in a tennis court or a dating service, would require an inquiry into many different features of these different



techniques or activities. But they would require nothing much new in the understanding of "fraud" or "racial discrimination."

IN ALL STRICTNESS, THEN, PROFESSOR WOLFE did not have to seek grants to support all of this work in the field, if the purpose of that work was to illuminate something more about the nature of "morality" and moral judgment. What comes through in the study was amply known already to people who had been tutored in the classics of moral philosophy or had reflected on the problem in a faintly demanding way. But if Professor Wolfe is committed, in his grants, to persist in this work, I would offer a wager to him if he added another question to his survey: With questions rather simple and direct, he can ask whether people understand certain wrongs whose wrongness is utterly contingent on matters of degree and circumstance. Most people, I would wager, would readily say that an alcoholic drink, taken in moderation, need not always be harmful. But the same people, I would also wager, would not say that genocide, taken in modest measures, would be harmless or inoffensive. My own bet is that most people will understand that difference, and insist on it themselves — even though they have no awareness of any specialized vocabulary of philosophy. They would not speak of things merely "contingently" wrong, as opposed to things that are "categorically" wrong or wrong

in principle. And yet, my wager is that they would make a distinction between wrongs that involve matters of degree, and certain things whose wrongness will not be effaced by matters of degree and circumstance. We can virtually foretell what the survey would report on that head. But if Professor Wolfe performs in his standard groove, he is likely to bring back to us, as "news," this striking report on the sophistication, in moral reasoning, shown by people in these modern times. And once again, I fear, the real news that will elude him is that there is no news at all: that nothing novel has been disclosed about the logic of morals, or the nature of that creature who conjugates verbs and seems inclined, irrepressibly, to give reasons and judge excuses.

Yet, it should go without saying that none of this made much sense if there were in fact no moral truths, no standards of judgment about the things that were indeed right or wrong. For what would "moral reasoning" be if there were nothing of moral significance that reason may come to "know"? And what of that "moral freedom" that Professor Wolfe takes it as his mission to celebrate and promote? On what grounds would we claim to know that it is "good," for others as well as ourselves, if there were no truths that confirmed its goodness or rightness? But Professor Wolfe is an academic who has evidently absorbed the intellectual currents at work in social science, and so he casually endorses, as a matter of course, the premises that would render his whole enterprise vacuous. For what he sets down, in the end, is simply the doctrine of moral relativism. He does it with some slight embellishment, or a bit of stylish distraction, but his teaching finally reduces to the claim that we can have no rational knowledge of the things that are right or wrong:

[O]ur arguments about the right and proper way to live are 'interminable' and there is no rational way by which people will ever see eye to eye over such issues as abortion, the provision of health care, or the necessity to prepare for war. ...[But] the fact that a wide variety of moral experience exists is, for [liberals], an indication of health. A pluralistic liberal democracy committed to equality and respect for difference ought to appreciate the fact that no one conception of the right and proper way to live has the power to drive out all others.

Is Wolfe merely reporting that no one

conception has the power to “drive out” all others, or is this lapse into the language of reporting really a way of slipping in the covert premise: that there is in fact no standard of judgment that can claim to be right, and governing, on matters of moral consequence when the society is divided? Put another way, he seems to be offering the familiar bromide that “the presence of disagreement on any matter of moral consequence indicates the absence of truth.” I would be obliged, of course, to register my disagreement with *that* proposition, and that should be enough, on its own terms, to establish its falsity. It is simply another version of what the philosophers would call a retorsive or self-refuting proposition. But even apart from that, Wolfe surely knows that the country was deeply divided over slavery in the 19th century, and over the Civil Rights Acts of 1964. Would he have concluded that there was no ground on which to reach moral judgments on these matters — and impose those judgments through the law?

“Moral freedom,” says Wolfe, “means that individuals should determine for themselves what it means to lead a good and virtuous life.” But I assume it goes without saying that nothing in this passage would lead Wolfe to suspend the laws on homicide and rape, even though those laws could offer the most serious inhibitions on people who are trying to act out their lives in the manner that accords with their own sense of the fitness of things. And yet, even apart from those obvious cases, we have seen, over the past 35 years, the most dramatic extension of the laws, cutting back the spheres of “privacy” or “moral freedom” at every level. Private businesses, large and small, private colleges, and even private clubs, have lost the “moral freedom” to arrange their affairs according to their own private criteria. Freedom in these domains has been dramatically curtailed or constricted as a result of the most strenuous attempt to vindicate the interests of justice on a broad front. But for reasons that must remain inexplicable, none of this seems to count for Wolfe, and none of this seems to come into view as Wolfe scans the experience of the country in recent years and finds in the record a vast expansion of “moral freedom.” What he appears to have in mind is the liberation that has come from the moral restraints that used to bear on sex. Sexual freedom has become the hallmark of personal freedom, and for many people it has become the “first freedom,” replacing freedom of religion or freedom of the press.

For Wolfe, this celebration of sexual freedom is not to be marred by anything as

rude or unsettling as the recognition of the deaths, on a vast scale, that have come along with that freedom. That thousands of young men have died of AIDS is not to be reckoned as a cost to be weighed in judging the goodness of a sexuality released from a framework of moral and legal restraints. And if one happens to acknowledge the fact recorded in every textbook on embryology and obstetrics — that the beings killed in abortions can be nothing less than human beings — the body count would be rather staggering. With 1.3-1.5 million abortions each year, carried out over 30 years, the box score would come out to about 40-50 million deaths. That kind of



figure would make an impression even on the dimmest sensibility, and it should be quite as plain that, for the 40-50 million humans killed in this way, the “moral freedom” to order abortions has not exactly been “liberating.” Evidently, Wolfe has screened those deaths from view. For he can preserve the celebration of “moral freedom” unimpaired only if he has settled himself in the judgment that those lives simply do not “count.”

But how has Wolfe reached that judgment? Has he sought to counter the evidence of embryology, or the force of principled reasoning, or has he fallen back, rather, on the assumption that this vexing question is governed solely by emotions and “beliefs”? Wolfe can neatly avoid the need to justify his judgments, on this and other matters, simply by invoking the slogan, passing into cliché, that on matters moral, argument is unavailing because reason, finally, has nothing to say. When he insists that there is no rational ground on which to settle the argument over abortion, he is merely doing a shuffle to cover the anchoring premise of moral relativism: that we can have no rational knowledge of the things that are right or wrong, just or unjust.

AND YET, THAT RULING PREMISE, JOINED here to the issue of abortion, finally discloses what should be regarded as the ruling embarrassment of the book. If Wolfe

contends that people will not be convinced or converted by reason on the matter of abortion, he clearly cannot speak in that vein as a social scientist, because the claim is patently, massively false. I know that it is false from the precise and sufficient example of my own case, or from that of countless other “converts” I have come to know over the years. We were not affected by appeals to faith or revelation; we were moved most decisively by the wonders of embryology and by the kind of principled reasoning that many of us found, in our clearest model, in Lincoln. In a notable fragment Lincoln had written for himself, he imagined himself in a conversation with an owner of black slaves, putting the question of how we justified making a slave of the black man:

You say A. is white, and B. is black. It is color, then: the lighter having the right to enslave the darker? Take care. By this rule, you are to be slave to the first man you meet, with a fairer skin than your own.

You do not mean *color* exactly? —You mean the whites are *intellectually* the superiors of the blacks, and therefore have the right to enslave them? Take care again. By this rule, you are to be slave to the first man you meet, with an intellect superior to your own.

At no point in the chain of reasoning was there an appeal to revelation. Lincoln’s fragment simply offered a model of principled reasoning. The upshot was that there was nothing one could cite to disqualify the black man as a human being, with a claim to his natural rights that could not be applied to many whites as well. And with the same logic, some of us simply carried over the same reasoning to the problem of abortion. Why was that child in the womb less than human? It did not speak? Neither did deaf mutes. It had no arms or legs? Well, many people lost limbs in the course of their lives, without losing attributes that were necessary, in any way, to their standing as human beings to receive the protections of the law.

If Wolfe were writing as a social scientist, speaking from surveys, he would do a survey to explore the question of just how many people out there formed their judgments about abortion in this way, and indeed underwent a conversion. But plainly, when Wolfe announced that people could not be swayed, by reason, in their judgments on abortion, he was not writing as a social scientist. He was doing nothing less than pronouncing a truth that governed our treatment of a moral question. He was pronouncing a moral truth, which would not hinge on anything

as uncouth, or as contingent and problematic, as a survey of opinion.

WHAT WOLFE WAS "DOING" THEN was moral philosophy, but without really doing it. He was offering judgments to the public on matters of moral import, while affecting to do only sociology, in merely describing the moral views held by the public. From his opening page he was brandishing moral conclusions, but without doing the work, or the heavy lifting, of moral philosophy. On the matter of abortion, writers on either side have marshaled evidence and reasons in an attempt to show the rightness of their judgments. If Wolfe really contends that there are no rational grounds to hold to the wrongness of abortion, he should have been obliged to make even a faintly strenuous effort to show why this vast body of work has been founded on a mistake; why it amounts to virtual nonsense. But that effort to justify the ground of his own judgments, or rebut the reasoning of the others, is persistently missing in the book.

We could even put aside that vexing argument over abortion, which moves in so many ways and unsettles old alliances. Wolfe has not even explained the judgment he would cast on the laws on civil rights. After all, very few things have brought about a more dramatic change in the character of American life over the past 35 years, and at the same time, those laws would have to represent the most massive interference in "moral freedom" by Wolfe's own definition.

In vast domains, public and private, people were faced with the terrible swift sword of the law if they held to their ancient moral fashions and sought to "determine for themselves what it means to lead a good and virtuous life."

We would have to suppose that Wolfe, a man of the tenderest feelings, and the widest liberal sympathies, would regard the laws on civil rights as landmarks of justice, even though they constituted the most extensive denial of "moral freedom." Unless, of course, we understand, with Lincoln and Aquinas, that we cannot coherently claim a "right to do a wrong." If the laws on Civil Rights forbade things that were truly wrong, then they marked no restriction of freedom, for the laws would have barred people from things they never really had a right to do. But that is a recognition that springs from moral philosophy. And if that perspective is applied to the measurement of "moral freedom," it means that we cannot celebrate the expansion of freedom merely by noting the gradual disappearance of moral and legal restraints. The trend can be celebrated only if we could judge that the freedom, in any case, was directed to a good or rightful end. If it is a new freedom, say, to withhold medical care from newborns with Down's syndrome, it could hardly be chalked up, with other such liberties, as a gain for the cause of freedom. But that is to say, the task here is not the mapping of trends. It is the task, rather, of the philosopher, who puts, insistently, at the center of the problem, the discipline of justifying his judgments on the things that are

right or wrong.

The moral philosopher understands then that we cannot carry out a survey on the moral condition of Americans without getting clear in the first place on the meaning of morality itself. And we cannot judge whether Americans are sensible or thoughtless in their moral sentiments without facing again the grounds on which we judge the things that are *truly* rightful or wrongful.

But Professor Wolfe has now made it plain, in a series of books, that the project of moral judgment, described in this way, is not what he does. Nor does he really do sociology, for his judgments on the main questions do not hinge on empirical research. It is truer to say that he uses the language and the arts of sociology to carry out a kind of stylish evasion of the demands, or the discipline, of moral philosophy. And liberated in that way from the burdens of moral philosophy, he has produced a grand enterprise, which promises to roll on, from one town to the next, and in a train of books stretching into the vast future.

One thing we might safely say, though, is this: When the last book is finished, we will know no more about the logic of morals or the properties of a moral judgment than we know today. And instructed by Professor Wolfe, we will know considerably less about the moral condition of the American people.

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VICTORY WATCH
by Angelo M. Codavilla

WHAT WAR?



"For them, war would consist of fighting as little as possible."

—Charles de Gaulle, *War Memoirs*, Vol. I,
on Franco-British policy between
September 1939 and June 1940

BY SPRING 2002, THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION'S pretense that it was making "war" had worn thin. The Bush team had invoked war, but aimed its military operations and diplomacy chiefly at minimizing the discomfort of "friendly" Arab governments. Intent on not displeasing, the Bush team let itself be diverted from fighting the terror states into restraining Israel. And yet these "friendly" governments, in thrall to the terror states of Iraq, Syria, and the Palestinian Authority, were practically accessories in the terrorist attacks on America. All of this calls for something of a postmortem on the war.

Rather than destroy enemies whose leaders' deaths would make the American people safe from terrorist attacks, the Bush team went out of its way not to identify any enemy except the "shadowy" al-Qaeda — as if a private organization could freely organize worldwide mayhem from Arab police states without being one of their tools.

So far, the Bush team's discussions of strategy amount to wish lists, unrelated to acts of war. Hence, rather than conveying readiness to force others to choose between being killed or accepting America's version of peace, the Bush diplomacy conveyed readiness to accept others' ever-pricier promises of peace. This is what

"peace processes" are all about: one side vainly seeks to avoid the reality of war.

Yet reality does not long permit the self-indulgences of phony war. That is because once the killing starts, one side's reluctance is the greatest encouragement for the other to fight. And the longer wars go on, the more possibilities they offer to the bold. That is why any government that stints its pursuit of victory in order to preserve its favorite current arrangements inevitably finds that others impose their own agendas on the conflict.

In sum, the "war on terrorism" did not veer off course in the spring: it wasn't on track from the beginning.

Never on Track

THE BUSH TEAM DECIDED, FROM THE START, to make war on "terrorism" (an abstract noun) rather than on real people. Nearly a century's experience should have taught Americans that to rid the world of certain abstract nouns — e.g., "militarism" (1917), "war" (1928), "aggression" (1941, 1950, 1990, etc.), or "poverty, hunger, disease, and ignorance" (Vietnam) — while making it safe for "democracy," would take ruling the globe with an iron hand. But latter-day American statesmen have eschewed matching military means to political ends. This has made U.S. foreign policy insolvent, unserious.

By nature, armed force only can kill certain people and regimes. Whom to kill is the decision that defines any war. In September 2001, in response to an attack on America by Arabs traveling on passports from "friendly" Arab countries

on behalf of causes supported by those countries' governments and embodied by the terror states of Iraq, Syria and the Palestinian Authority, the Bush team decided to kill people in Afghanistan and to overthrow the Taliban regime. No one argued that this would make America safe from the rising enmity of the Arab world, or definitely avenge the attacks of September 11. Indeed, the Bush team acknowledged that Arab governments were abetting this enmity and warned that it would have to root out Arab enemies. But it deferred the whole matter to an undefined "next phase," because it did not want to displease "friendly" Arab governments. Saudi Arabia conditioned its support of the war on Americans' not killing any Arabs at all. Thus the Bush administration allowed the war to go off the serious track — at least temporarily.

But the temporary threatens to become permanent. Deference to the Saudi and Egyptian governments — the reason that the first Bush administration had stopped short of Baghdad in 1991 — dictated once again the deferral of action. The completion of the U.S. war in Afghanistan did not usher in the "next phase" in which America would fight its enemies in the Arab world. Instead, American troops would scour the ends of the earth for al-Qaeda. Pursuant to intelligence reports of sophisticated terrorist nerve centers in northeast Afghan caves, U.S. troops stormed the caves — and found nothing of the sort. But real information could not trigger action against Arab states. In the March 25 issue of *The New Yorker*, Jeffrey Goldberg reported that Saddam Hussein was making use of elements of al-Qaeda to fight the Kurds in northern Iraq.

Yet this report coincided with the Bush team's admission that planning for any invasion of Iraq had been deferred to 2003, if then.

Why? Because nothing that happened on September 11 had changed the Bush team's primary objective in the Middle East — maintaining the status quo — or its evaluation of what the status quo required, namely, the good graces of Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Alas, to ask dubious allies to support a course of action that one has already shown the willingness to defer and redefine, amounts to asking for further pressure to defer, redefine, and derail.

On the Enemy Track

FOLLOWING THE SAUDIS' LEAD, AMERICA'S ARAB "friends" persuaded the Bush administration to abstain from rooting out America's enemies in the Arab world and devote itself to restraining Israel from striking at its enemies in the Arab world. The Arab powers persuaded the Bush team to turn from America's war to a role in *their* war, and on *their* side.

In the 1990s, Saddam Hussein's Iraqi regime had become the leading force in the Arab world. Despite losing half his military forces in the 1991 Persian Gulf War, Saddam won over the region's most virulent elements by surviving to thumb his nose at America and denouncing all manifestations of Arab collaboration with the United States. By adroit, vehement propaganda, money, and murder, he and the leaders of the other terror states personified the identification of Islam with anti-Westernism. Their movement, which included political and philanthropic as well as terrorist activities, grew fat and strong on the protection money extorted from the Saudi royal family. By the turn of the century its message that America, its Jews, and their "Zionist entity" were polluting Arab lands had forced America's Arab "friends," notably including the Saudi royal family, to follow their fears more than their friendships.

TO SHIFT THE BUSH TEAM FROM AMERICA'S war to their own, the Arab terror regimes had first to manufacture one. The spring of 2002 saw a dramatic increase in the level of attacks by various Palestinian forces against Israel. These assaults, which included suicide bombing, inflicted half as many casualties on Israel as had the 1967 war. This new war served no interest of the ordinary Palestinians. It made their lives immeasurably worse materially, and subjected them to constant danger of execution as "collaborators" for failure to back the war. Note also that suicide bombing was anything but the action of autonomous individuals. The bombers' families received sums of money that

amounted to compelling endowments, supplied publicly by the Saudi royal family and Saddam's Iraqi government.

The Saudi royal family's demands were straightforward: The Bush team must intervene by interposing American bodies between Israel and the Palestinians in exchange for Saudi promises to intercede with the Palestinians. But note that our Arab "friends" also promised that in any quarrel between America and the terror states they would stand, publicly at least, with...the terror states. To do otherwise would undermine their stability, which the Bush team would not desire, right? By the end of April, President Bush had bought this line and had committed American officers to "oversee" (with no power to compel) the Palestinian Authority's promise to keep certain malefactors in prison. He promised to send more Americans, and had in fact already put the brakes on Israel's own war on terrorists.

Did the Bush administration not know that Americans, thus interposed, would become the occasion of endless diversions? Did the administration not care about avenging September 11, about fighting all terrorists, about erasing distinctions between terrorists and those who harbor them? They probably did know and care — just not enough to change longstanding foreign policy priorities and intellectual habits, not to mention the people who run U.S. intelligence and diplomacy.

Three Monkeys

"SEE NO EVIL, HEAR NO EVIL, SPEAK NO EVIL" describes U.S. intelligence in the war on terrorism. Nine months after September 11, U.S. intelligence still has no idea who most of the hijackers were, where the operation was organized, by whom, or who paid for it. Our professionals concluded that, except for Osama bin Laden, the identity of America's enemies is a mystery. Still, they are certain that our enemies are amateurs, unconnected with professional intelligence services.

Start with the Saudi hijackers. The photos and names released by the U.S. government match flight manifests with visa files from U.S. consulates. But the only pictures of the hijackers from security cameras are of persons *other than the ones in the visa files and flight manifests*. Indisputably, the hijackers used stolen identities. That is a mark of a major-league intelligence service. (The Saudi government prevented independent investigation of who the hijackers really were.)

The hijacking itself bore marks of professionalism: the hijackers used sophisticated chemical sprays and methods of rapid entry into the cockpits, they had mastered navigation beyond what had been taught them in their U.S. flight

schools, and they had turned off the planes' transponders — which also had not been taught them in the flight schools.

Then there is the \$100,000 that financed the U.S. part of the mission. Mohammed Atta, an Egyptian, reportedly got it after a meeting in June 2000 in Prague with Ahmed al Ani, an Iraqi intelligence officer who specialized in handling terrorists. The account from which the money came had been professionally scrubbed of the owner's identity. On April 9, 2001, Atta made a 72-hour trip to see al Ani again. Two weeks later, the trained "soldiers" in the hijacking left Saudi Arabia for America. Did the two terrorists talk about the lingerie business?

From all this, a reasonable person — also knowing that Iraq has a facility where terrorists train to take over Boeing aircraft — might conclude that September 11 had been organized by Iraq, with connections in Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

But the CIA paid attention to trails that the hijack operation had chosen *not* to cover. On September 9, Atta wired \$15,000 back to a different account. This one had an unhidden owner — an associate of Osama bin Laden. Osama had done it! And Atta had left his flight manual in a car he had rented in his own name. He only knew what he learned in flight school! See? An amateur operation planned in one of those fabulous Afghan caves.

If Wishes Were Strategy...

WITH THE HELP OF THE CIA, THE BUSH TEAM imagines the world somewhat as follows: nearly all the world's governments see terrorism as a threat to themselves as well as to civilized life, and are more-or-less willing to cooperate in rooting it out. The problem is that the Gulf War and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have inhibited modernization and secularization in the Muslim world. The key to defeating terrorism is the cooperation of friendly, progressive governments in the Muslim world. To get that cooperation, we must ensure the survival of those governments. To do that, we must cool any conflicts that raise popular ire against them and America. This means any American attack on Iraq would be counterproductive. It would call forth more terrorism than it would prevent, and would directly endanger friendly governments. This also means cooling the Arab-Israeli conflict, whatever the cost. Once Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and maybe Syria and the Palestinian Authority too, can afford to be as friendly to America as is Pakistan, then liaison between their intelligence services and ours will leave the terrorists nowhere to hide. The war on terrorism will be won by police measures.

Reality

SUCCESS FUELS HOPE OF VICTORY, WHICH FUELS effort. By this spring, only American policy makers could fail to understand that the Saudi government's diplomatic overtures to Teheran and above all to Baghdad, as well as its assumption of the role as their advocate in the West, implied its recognition that it was living at its enemies' sufferance. Any number of troublemakers in the region surely saw in the Saudi government's weakness the chance of their lives. There is little doubt that someone will seize that chance and that the House of Saud will first split and then fall, which in turn will convince more people

in the region to try for power and glory. That is what real wars are made of. As stability, the Bush team's premise and objective, disappears, the Bush team finally will have to confront the choice that it worked so hard to avoid: between paying the price of victory and that of defeat. And it will have to do this from a well-earned position of disadvantage.

Governments bend to those they fear, and bite those they hold in contempt. The Bush team's conduct of the "war" made the Arab world less afraid of America. How could that be, given all the bombs America dropped on Afghanistan? Simple. The Arab world knew all along that America could drop those bombs. It wondered,

however, would America dare to drop them in order to alter the balance of power among the Arabs themselves? By dropping them on Afghanistan, America answered, no. "Friendly" Arabs' estimate of America's capacity to protect them from threats foreign and domestic also dropped. America seemed weak again when the Bush team recoiled from the Arab world's brandishing of the ultimate terror weapon, suicide bombing. Count on it: the next stage of the war will feature suicide bombings on American streets.

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Book Review by K.R. Constantine Gutzman

THE MAN BEHIND THE SIGNATURE

John Hancock: Merchant King and American Patriot,
by Harlow Giles Unger. John Wiley and Sons, 383 pages, \$30

THIS BIOGRAPHY OF THE LEADING Massachusetts patriot of the Revolutionary period, John Hancock, is written in an accessible, non-academic style, and will appeal to both lay and expert readers.

John Hancock served as governor of Massachusetts, president of the Continental Congress, and president of the Massachusetts ratification convention. From the beginning of the Imperial Crisis until his death in 1793, Hancock incontestably was the foremost figure in New England political life. Yet his station at birth gave little indication of his future eminence.

Hancock's father died when he was only seven years old. This personal disaster would prove to be a political disaster for the First British Empire. John soon was adopted into the family of his childless paternal uncle, Thomas Hancock, who from his home on Beacon Hill in Boston controlled a private fleet of trading ships; extensive real estate holdings in Massachusetts and the rest of New England; and an enormous network of trading relationships. His intention was to remake his uncouth, rural nephew into the heir to this merchant empire — to train him to dominate the highest of colonial high society. John Hancock took to his new surroundings like a fish to water.

Unger is at his best in describing the physical and social setting in which Hancock moved. The life of the "merchant king" was one of great luxury, and Unger provides contemporary maps and sketches illustrating it: the sumptuous house; the battalion of servants; the carriages

emblazoned with the Hancock arms; the parks, fire engines, and other gifts from Hancock to his adopted city; and the gifts to myriad common people teetering on the brink of economic ruin as a result of the Revolution's disruption of trade. Unger also shows the close connection between Hancock's unparalleled wealth and his political success. Unsurprisingly, beneficiaries of Hancock's munificence felt inclined to repay him with election to high office.

The leading weakness in Unger's account is the short shrift he gives to the patriots' constitutional arguments in the Imperial Crisis. So, for example, one reads that James Otis's and Patrick Henry's arguments about the constitutionality of British taxation were "fatuous." Unger notes that many residents of Great Britain were unrepresented in Parliament, so that the colonists in North America had no special grievance. In other words, if the British political establishment deprived some of George III's subjects in England of their rights, George's subjects in America could not legitimately complain about infractions of their rights, either. From this argument to the conclusion that no one in any country at any time could ever claim any particular right is not a long leap.

As far as Unger is concerned, it was Hancock's attention to his fortune that tipped the scale for him in the 1760s and 1770s in the contest between the royal government and Boston's patriot mobs. At first, Hancock was loyal to the king and country whose law gave him the opportunity to become rich and influential, cultivated and comfortable.

His connections and temperament made him uncomfortable with men like the street toughs surrounding the easily angered Samuel Adams. Hancock is typical of the moderate men who took a while to come around to Adams's way of thinking, in part because of their distaste for his tactics.

But in the face of the increasingly exacting British tariff policy, and with the Boston mob at his back, Hancock ultimately cast his lot with the patriots. To the annoyance of John and Samuel Adams, Hancock's political course, coupled with his extremely extensive philanthropy, made him by far the most popular man in Massachusetts politics.

Unger's account of the Massachusetts campaign to ratify the federal constitution nicely illustrates the Adams clique's resentment of Hancock. While Hancock, then governor and president of the ratifying convention, suffered through an extreme physical debility, the Adamses wrote to one another about Hancock's supposed posturing and his sly intention to await the verdict of the convention before declaring himself. In fact, Unger shows, Hancock was certain that the Constitution must be ratified to preserve the fruits of the Revolution, but was simply unable to participate fully in the ratification convention's deliberations.

Unger's Hancock is a worthy man in virtually every way, and *John Hancock: Merchant King and American Patriot* is well illustrated in the bargain.

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Review by Larry P. Arnn

WINSTON IS BACK

Churchill: A Biography, by Roy Jenkins.
Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 736 pages, \$40

Churchill: A Study of Greatness, by Geoffrey Best.
Hambledon Press, 384 pages, \$29.95

"The Gathering Storm," HBO Films.
Directed by Richard Loncraine; Screenplay by Hugh Whitmore



THERE IS A WAR ON. FORCES COMMAND-
ed from Afghanistan have raided across
the border, not this time into India, but
into New York City and Washington, D.C. The
Mideast is in flames. America and Britain have
gone into the government-changing business in
Afghanistan and may open franchises elsewhere.
Putting a name to these actions, a senior British
diplomat has called for a new form of Empire.

How interesting that we should pick this
time to renew our acquaintance with Winston
Churchill. Roy Jenkins, a member of Parlia-
ment for years in the socialist Labour Party
that Churchill worked all his life to destroy,
has written a biography calling Churchill the
greatest modern Prime Minister. Oxford histo-
rian Geoffrey Best has written the finest among
many short biographies of Churchill under the
subtitle *A Study in Greatness*. HBO has produced
a special that is surely the finest drama ever made
about Churchill. Taking notice of this trend, the
Atlantic Monthly in April published a cover article
on Churchill by Christopher Hitchens. Though
Hitchens attempts more blame than praise, his
blaming is derived mostly and unwittingly from
sorry old slanders long disproved, and he col-
lapses at the end into reluctant respect.

The first remarkable thing about this new
attention to Churchill is how highly favorable it
is to the man as war leader and enemy of Hit-
ler. The second is the uniformity and finality
with which it rejects Churchill's idea of empire.
We have therefore a chance to measure both
Churchill and ourselves, a chance that comes at
a decisive moment.

Churchill the warrior appears most vividly
in the film, which however is not about the war
but its coming. "The Gathering Storm" demon-
strates the stubborn and unshakable courage
with which Churchill faced down the appeasers.

Then as now, politics was a contact sport. In
Parliament in the 1930s, Churchill was derided
as old and out of touch. Opposing the conser-
vative government on devolution in Egypt and
India and on appeasement, he was scorned as a
tired old traitor to his party, seeking glory alone.
This charge is repeated by Christopher Hitch-
ens today.

Words were not the only form of hostility.
Churchill's station and his livelihood were as-
saulted. "The Gathering Storm" tells in detail
the story of Ralph Wigram, a Churchill contact
in the Foreign Office who gave him information.
Wigram had a wife and child, the latter in need
of special medical care. So of course his wife was
threatened with his transfer to a place obscure
where his family could not follow. Churchill's
son-in-law, MP Duncan Sandys, was con-
fronted with an Attorney General's investiga-
tion over his possession of information about
the state of German arms. Efforts were made by
the government to deprive Churchill of his seat
in the House of Commons. Publishers pressed
Churchill to change his views or lose his job, and
over imperial policy he did lose one of his pub-
lishing contracts.

Meanwhile Churchill argued day after day to
an empty house, and wrote article after article to
a public that would not listen. His wife, gener-
ally a fortress in their common cause, went away
for months on a cruise with a handsome young
man. His bank manager inquired frequently
how Churchill would replace the funds he had
lost in the Crash of '29. He lost more in the
Crash of '36. He was hit by a car, nearly killed,
and laid up for weeks. The bills piled up. He
and the staff worked night and day. Between the
ages of 56 and 64, after a lifetime of success now
submerged in rejection and failure, Churchill did
the best writing and speaking of his life. From

this period comes his wonderful *Marlborough: His Life and Times*, probably Churchill's greatest book. He fought, surrounded and outnumbered, yet always on the attack. Historian William Manchester argues that this, and not the 1940s, was Churchill's finest hour. Indeed, few would have had the heart for such a lonely battle. HBO's "The Gathering Storm" shows this part of his story magnificently.

The film features Albert Finney, who be-
comes the man. He has not only the famous
determination, but also the zest. He shows not
only the massive productiveness, but also its cost
in weariness and pain. He shows the bluster
and the sympathy, the eloquence and the wit,
the deadliness to strike and the impact of the
blows he suffered. Unlike Richard Burton, who
once played a wonderful Churchill that was not
very much like Churchill, Finney has mastered
the cadence and pace of his speech and makes
the lisp discernible but not distracting. Vanessa
Redgrave is also very like Clemmie. Even when
she throws a plate, which the real Clemmie did,
she like the real Clemmie shows not hate but
hurt. The power of the acting is embellished by
insights from many good historical sources, es-
pecially the beginning of William Manchester's
second volume on Churchill that paints a bril-
liant picture of Churchill's daily life. Though
the film fails in a place or two (they should have
hired Martin Gilbert, as was done in a previous
documentary to great benefit), in a brief space it
shows the very nature of the man and his deeds
and his time.

Both the new biographies have their virtues,
too. They both for instance do a good job de-
scribing the 1930s rearmament debate that is the
feature of the film. Jenkins's strength throughout
is that he is himself a politician, and he often re-
counts the political conversations that happened

behind the scenes with insight. He tells the story of Churchill's greatest few days, from May 24 to 28, 1940, almost as well as John Lukacs in his splendid *Five Days in London*. Jenkin's book being much longer than that of Best, he is free to reprint extensive passages from Churchill's speeches, though not so free as Martin Gilbert in his official biography, from which all else is written if it is written well. It is always good to hear it from the horse's mouth.

Best tells the story in the mere twinkling of an eye, just over 350 pages to cover a life long, rich, and uncommon. He accomplishes this by writing essays on each period of Churchill's life. He summarizes what is happening with clarity and a high degree of accuracy, and he has a good understanding of what Churchill is thinking and what he means. Alas, there are exceptions.

India

NEITHER BEST NOR JENKINS IS AT HIS best when discussing India, for example. The film is just as bad, with blessed brevity on the subject.

The HBO drama is about Churchill's wilderness years. As a drama for our times, this part of Churchill's story has however a flaw: it does not begin in the right place. Too bad that Churchill did not break with Stanley Baldwin first about Hitler, or even Stalin. That would make a good clean tale, and we would not have to make the point that Churchill was "wrong about India, as he has so often been wrong." "The Gathering Storm" places this speech in the mouth of Desmond Morton, one of Churchill's closest colleagues and best sources of information. This is the same Morton who wrote to Churchill in December 1934: "India in the Commons was a personal triumph for you."

Roy Jenkins calls his chapter on India "Unwisdom in the Wilderness." Geoffrey Best takes the same line. He begins by congratulating the National Government that proposed and accomplished Indian constitutional reform:

[The plan of Indian constitutional reform] proceeded from the basis that British Imperial theory, notwithstanding the gibes of Leninists and indigenous nationalists, was sincere in its declared principle that overseas territories were held by the British for the benefit of their inhabitants...and for only so long as it took those inhabitants to acquire the capacities and capabilities to govern themselves.

Best implies that Churchill disagrees with this, and he goes on to say that Churchill threw himself into what Best calls "a reactionary posture." Best

comments that some in Churchill's crowd "talked as if" Winston were "en route to a political coup," and that "something of that sort may have been in his mind..." Goodness. It is impossible to track from this statement who said what. One hopes that Best means only a coup to win the premiership in the parliamentary party committee. The vagueness of this criticism betrays the absence of facts characteristic of this whole chapter.

Churchill, Best accurately reports, believed that as soon as the British began to leave India that the "Hindus and Muslims would begin to slaughter one another." Moreover, he continues, Churchill had no "serious knowledge about Indians or any other nonwhite peoples."

Best does not mention that the Hindus and Muslims did begin to slaughter one another, by the hundreds of thousands (Gandhi was one of the slain); that they ultimately partitioned the country into two separate states, both now possessing nuclear weapons and having fought several wars between them. At this moment the Indian army is conducting major military maneuvers along the Pakistani border. Pakistani terrorists, the friends of Osama bin Ladin, attempted recently to invade the Indian Parlia-



ment and kill those within it. Tensions, as they say in international coverage, remain high.

Churchill, moreover, had very considerable experience both with India and with "nonwhite peoples." He had fought in Afghanistan and served in India. He had fought in both northern and southern Africa. He had been Secretary of State for the Colonies, in which post he had negotiated the founding of Arab states and supported the founding of modern Israel. He had done this on the spot in the Middle East, just over a decade earlier.

In his book on the Boer War, Churchill had written that the real issue between the Boers, who were South Africans of Dutch extraction, and the English, was that the former "would never accept the equality of the Kafir." In an Independence Day speech in 1918, when America and Britain were allies in the First World War, he had said of the Declaration of Independence that "by it we lost an empire, and by it we also preserved an empire. By applying its principles and learning its lessons we have maintained our communion with the powerful Commonwealths our children have established beyond the seas."

To be sure, India was not part of the Com-

monwealth, and it was not self-governing. Why, one may ask, was India not entitled to the same treatment as Australia, Canada, or New Zealand?

Churchill addresses that question at considerable length in his many speeches on the Indian question. He asserts repeatedly the right of the Indians to govern themselves. For example, in August 1930: "let me...reaffirm the inflexible resolve of Great Britain to aid the Indian people to fit themselves increasingly for the duties of self-government. Upon that course we have been embarked for many years, and we assign no limits to its ultimate fruition." This is a common theme and cannot be missed by anyone who reads the speeches.

At the same time he holds that India is not ready. He mentions the division between Muslim and Hindu. He mentions the pervasive illiteracy, the other differences of religion, the division into royal kingdoms, the caste system. He mentions the fact that peace and order have reigned in India under British rule, and because of that the population has grown, and so Britain bears a responsibility at least for the people who are part of the increase. The weight of these things is hard to feel now, when India is becoming a great nation, developing its economy, building a middle class, and achieving the peaceful alternation in power of its chief political parties. More than 60 years have passed, and the hope that India may now present was distant in those days. Some of the problems persist in India today.

WE MAY, HOWEVER, SOON ENOUGH have cause to understand these things again. We are talking of building democracy in places like the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, Iraq, and North Korea. Let us say, for example, that we form the view that children in some distant land should not be taught the method and the rightness of suicidal murder of civilians. Let us say that they should not be taught to kill people because of their race or religion — and also that their families should not be paid large sums when they do it. Let us say that teenagers should not be instructed how to carry ugly bombs around as if they were knapsacks. Let us say that we propose to stop this. We will not find this easy to do.

Whether we act under the authority of an international bureaucracy, as the British diplomat Robert Cooper suggests, or under the authority of the U.N., or under American authority, we will find that we are interfering in the closest matters of local policy. We will need to regulate what happens in villages and little towns, in their schools and perhaps — for this is where the problem often is — in their churches. We

may try to find local leaders who are responsible and good and put them in power. In that case we will be choosing their rulers, and by that principle we will be tempted if they fail us to replace them, and replace them again if need be.

Churchill said there would be bloodshed in India if the British left, and there was. We are now on a global quest to prevent bloodshed in our own cities. We are acting on at least one of the principles that Churchill embraced. In his book on the war that he fought in Afghanistan as a young man, Churchill calls the last chapter "The Riddle of the Frontier." He writes there that it is very hard to go into Afghanistan and subdue the raiding tribesmen. Our troops, recently winning a glorious victory, are however still engaged in the work. We have not found Osama.

Churchill writes that it is also very hard to hold a defensive line, ever at the ready, along the great border, when the tribesmen may rest when they please and strike where they wish. He favors the more active policy. Both are full of difficulty.

Now we have a greater cause than Churchill had in 1896. If we wait, we may lose not a building but a city. Lately Mr. Warren Buffet, who is in the insurance business, has written that we are bound to do precisely this. In earlier days he would sometimes explain that he makes large margins in the insurance business because his company is big and sound enough to handle the biggest risks. One year he may lose, but most years he wins. But this terrorism, he says, is a risk too big for him. Only the government, he says, is big enough to handle it. But the government is all of us. How long would it take us to replace the immeasurable value in people and things that can be found today in New York City, if that were the place attacked? And it may not be just one place.

Before we blush and mumble that Churchill was a racist — which he was not — we should think how things are now. If the past is the key to the future, then perhaps some reflection on our own problems in the present might open our eyes to the living problems of the past. Here is a moment when we might revisit not the new, but the old kind of liberalism upon which Churchill built his view of empire.

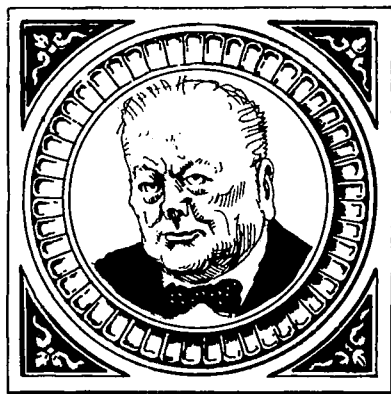
Wilderness Years

THE KEYS TO CHURCHILL IN THE 1930S are that he knew, and had known since before the First World War, how grave a European war would be; and that he judged foreign affairs by the same criteria he judged those at home.

Churchill saw the nature of modern warfare as it emerged on some small battlefields of the

late 19th century, where he demonstrated the cool sort of bravery that is attributed to George Washington. He never got a chance to show if he could see the battlefield with a general's eye, but he did see it with the eye of a statesman. He had watched the Dervish Army charge with fervor upon the British line at Omdurman. He had noted the fury of muscle, bone, and blood with which they galloped. He had compared this to the "tedious" and mechanical efficiency with which the British had destroyed them almost before they came into sight. In 1901, he said in the House of Commons: "... European war can only end in the ruin of the vanquished and the scarcely less fatal commercial dislocation and exhaustion of the conquerors."

In 1925, Churchill published a frightening



essay titled "Shall We All Commit Suicide." He writes:

Mankind has never been in this position before. Without having improved appreciably in virtue or enjoying wiser guidance, it has got into its hands for the first time the tools by which it can unfailingly accomplish its own extermination. That is the point in human destinies to which all the glories and toils of men have at last led them. They would do well to pause and ponder upon their new responsibilities. Death stands at attention, obedient, expectant, ready to serve, ready to shear away the peoples *en masse*; ready, if called on, to pulverize without hope of repair, what is left of civilization. He awaits only the word of command. He awaits it from the frail, bewildered being, long his victim, now — for one occasion only — his Master.

One may find passages like this throughout Churchill's adult life. In his speeches on the hydrogen bomb one hears from a man who had, already a generation before, pronounced the doom that it entails. Today things are of course worse. Today we must face the fact that some city that

required a hundred years to build can be demolished, its location polluted beyond reclaim, by a man with a satchel bomb and a venomous heart.

Churchill, facing the specter of Hitler, knew very well what such people might do. In his 1955 speech on nuclear war, Churchill describes the policy of nuclear deterrence that he helped to invent. Then:

I must make one admission, and any admission is formidable. The deterrent does not cover the case of lunatics or dictators in the mood of Hitler when he found himself in his final dug-out. That is a blank. But happily we may find methods of protecting ourselves, if we were all agreed, against that.

The past repeats itself, and lately. Osama and Saddam retired, like Hitler, underground. Their missiles are soon to be much better than the V2. Like Hitler they see us coming, and they work furiously on their anthrax spreaders, dirty bombs, and atomic bombs, just as Hitler did his rockets and atomic bombs after the invasion of France. Hitler's bombs and rockets and jet aircraft were almost ready in time. But for Churchill, they might have been. Unless we find another like him, Osama and Saddam will meet their deadline.

THE KEENNESS OF CHURCHILL'S INSIGHT into these horrors only makes more wonderful the energy with which he opposed them. By 1934 everyone knew what Churchill had known for decades: modern war is horrible. Baldwin, Chamberlain, Halifax and the appeasers learned this when a million British were killed and wounded in the trenches in Flanders. Their reaction was to contrive a policy in which war would be prevented by the absence of weapons. When Germany built weapons, they retreated to demonstrations of friendship and weakness together. Repelled by the awfulness of war, uncertain of support from a people made fearful by slaughter, they tried for a time to lay low. Stanley Baldwin explained that his plan was for the Nazis to fight the Bolshies. "Too easy to be good," replied Churchill.

What then was his plan? If the relentless advance of weapons is leading to the place where mankind may "commit suicide," how are we to stop it? That was as much the question of Churchill's day as of ours.

Churchill's answer is the answer not of the philosopher but of the statesman. It is the kind of practical answer that both scholars and statesmen today often miss. He summarizes his answer under the title, "Arms and the Covenant." By the Covenant he means not merely

the covenant of the League of Nations, which proved weak and unable to distinguish the urgent from the merely important. He means rather an alliance between all who would resist Hitler, beginning with the advocates of the League but leading anywhere. He consorted with socialists and Communists and the Spanish and Italian fascists. He courted unions and civic groups and anybody else at home and abroad. Anyone who was a lesser threat than Hitler was a candidate. In this he was of course "inconsistent," for he deplored both socialism and Communism and thought they differed from Hitler "as the North Pole differs from the South." But the "consistency" implied in this standard is unknown to the statesman, whose first task is the necessary.

As for Arms, Churchill meant predominance if he could get it and parity if he could not. He preferred overwhelming force, as soon as it could be got, in the greatest abundance available. If you wish to know how he sounded to the ears of 1934, listen to Mark Helprin or Victor Davis Hanson today.

Looming above this argument for war preparation is a greater thing still, Churchill's early recognition of Hitler for what he was. As Hitchens in the *Atlantic Monthly* rightly points out, this achievement seems facile today. But it was not so in 1933 when Hitler came to power. Hitler played the politics of each potential enemy with the mastery that he displayed in Germany itself. To the visiting Tory politician he was an anti-Communist. To the visiting socialist he was himself a socialist, trying to better the lot of the German worker, which, by the by, he did for a time. To all he was attempting to redress the real grievances of an unjust peace. Behind these soft and reasonable words there was also the hint of the threat; threats made to nations so wounded were fearful things.

In a telling passage, Hitchens gives Churchill credit for seeing through this. He writes:

I find that I cannot rerun the tape of 1940, for example, and make it come out, or wish it to come out, any other way. This is for one purely subjective reason: ...alone among his contemporaries, Churchill did not denounce the Nazi Empire merely as a threat, actual or potential, to the British one. Nor did he speak of it as a depraved but possibly useful ally. He excoriated it as a wicked and nihilistic thing.... [S]ome saving intuition prompted Churchill to recognize, and to name out loud, the pornographic and catastrophically destructive nature of the foe. Only this redeeming x-factor justifies all the rest — the paradoxes and inconsistencies, to be sure, and even the hypocrisy.

It is hard to see why this is a "purely subjective" reason. It follows a passage in which Hitchens speculates that Hitler would have died early anyway. If war had not been declared when it was, then, Hitchens suggests that perhaps its misery might have been avoided or abbreviated. But the war began when Hitler attacked Poland, before Churchill was a member of the government. Hitler's death was hastened, not postponed, by Britain's (and the Allies') declaration and winning of the war. He blew his own brains out because he was about to be captured, and he would have died later if he had not shot himself. When he died he was making weapons of a kind that would have been decisive in his hands, and he was obstructed from the completion of those weapons by the war being waged upon him from Britain.

Also, it is no secret why and how Churchill understood Hitler to be an evil force. In 1934,

while visiting Germany, Churchill had the chance to meet Hitler. Hitler canceled the meeting because Churchill told its organizer that he meant to ask Hitler what he had against the Jews. In the very speech that Hitchens cites above, a few lines before the quotation, Churchill makes the point exquisitely plain:

You have to consider the character of the Nazi movement and the rule which it implies. ...[T]here can never be friendship between the British democracy and the Nazi power, that power which spurns Christian ethics, which cheers its onward course by a barbarous paganism, which vaunts the spirit of aggression and conquest, which derives strength and perverted pleasure from persecution, and uses, as we have seen, with pitiless brutality, the threat of murderous force. That power cannot ever be the trusted friend of the British democracy.

It took a certain kind of genius to see this early, when Churchill saw it, and it took an amazing persistence and courage to advance it against the forces Churchill faced. But the thing he saw was not "subjective." Nor was it some mysterious x. It was the difference between tyranny and free government, the distinction upon which Churchill built his political life. If we cannot see that we cannot see anything. If we cannot honor those who see it in time to save our freedom, we cannot honor anyone.

Churchill receives well-deserved honor in each of these works. Maybe we are on the way back. We have a way to go.

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Book Review by Thomas L. Krannawitter

DISHONEST ABOUT ABE

The Real Lincoln: A New Look at Abraham Lincoln, His Agenda, and an Unnecessary War,
by Thomas DiLorenzo. Prima Publishing, 274 pages, \$24.95



WITH MALICE TOWARDS ALL AND charity towards none of Abraham Lincoln's principles and actions, *The Real Lincoln* is the latest attempt to finish the job so ignobly begun by John Wilkes Booth in April 1865. Although Lincoln breathed no more after that, his character and reputation lived on, to be sniped at ever since.

The Lincoln haters are an increasingly diverse lot, with strange and not always compatible purposes. The alleged purpose of Thomas DiLorenzo's invective is to defend constitutionalism and free market economics. He claims to demonstrate that Lincoln was an enemy of both, as well as a hypocrite on the subject of "racial equality." What he mainly demonstrates, however, is that his aim is not nearly as good as Booth's.

As the title suggests, *The Real Lincoln* purports to go beyond the mountains of revisionist historiography to reveal Lincoln's genuine principles and purposes. According to DiLorenzo, these had nothing to do with the perpetuation of free government and the problem of slavery: The "real" Lincoln did not care a whit about the "peculiar institution." At the core of the "real" Lincoln's ambition was an unqualified and unwavering commitment to mercantilism, or socialism as DiLorenzo sometimes intimates. Lincoln would stop at nothing to impose the "Whig economic system" upon America, and any opinion he voiced regarding slavery was merely instrumental in advancing this end. Lincoln's "cause," in the words of DiLorenzo, was "centralized government and the pursuit of empire." According to DiLorenzo, Lincoln said this "over and over again," although DiLorenzo does not trouble himself to produce a shred of evidence for this assertion.

If the "real" Lincoln needed to resort to

war to advance his cause, he was happy to do it: "Lincoln decided that he had to wage war on the South," because only military might would destroy "the constitutional logjam behind which the old Whig economic policy agenda had languished." In the end, writes DiLorenzo, "[Lincoln] wanted war" and "was not about to let the Constitution stand in his way." Lincoln was devoted to undermining the Constitution in the name of tariffs and internal improvement schemes. In its place Lincoln hoped to build a centralized mercantilist-socialist state, with himself at the helm.

Of course Lincoln and his Republican Party supported tariffs, as had many Federalists, Democrats, and Whigs before them. They understood, as DiLorenzo does not, that all economics is political economics, and that in a world dominated by monarchs it made sense to encourage the expansion of American manufacturing power through tariffs. According to DiLorenzo's libertarian-public choice analysis, Alexander Hamilton and his Whig followers — Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, and Lincoln above all — were arch-villain "statists" for supporting tariffs, while Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and John C. Calhoun were defenders of "free trade." DiLorenzo seems not to know that the first protective tariff in American history (1816) was introduced by Calhoun and supported by Madison and Jefferson, and opposed by Webster. DiLorenzo is so blinded by his commitment to purely theoretical free trade that he is oblivious to the real growing division between pro-slavery and pro-freedom forces in America in the 1850s. He cannot see that tariffs were in the service of free trade because they were in the service of freedom: tariffs advantaged free labor and put the squeeze on slave-labor economies.

In fact, DiLorenzo's "new look" shows us

nothing new. From the time of Jefferson Davis's *The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government* and Alexander Stephens's *A Constitutional View of the Late War Between the States*, the anti-Lincoln columns have marched over and over the same tired ground. Edgar Lee Masters's *Lincoln the Man*, which DiLorenzo quotes approvingly, was a breathless compilation of every slander ever made against Lincoln. But if DiLorenzo's message is old hat, the incompetence of the messenger is surely unprecedented. The book is a compendium of misquotations, out-of-context quotations, and wrongly attributed quotations — one howler after another, yet none of it funny.

For example, DiLorenzo repeatedly asserts that Lincoln did not believe in human equality and shared the widely held prejudices of his time that blacks were inferior. Here is DiLorenzo:

Lincoln even mocked the Jeffersonian dictum enshrined in the Declaration of Independence that all men are created equal. He admitted that it had become "a genuine coin in the political currency of our generation," but added, "I am sorry to say that I have never seen two men of whom it is true. But I must admit I never saw the Siamese Twins, and therefore will not dogmatically say that no man ever saw a proof of this sage aphorism" So, with the possible exception of Siamese Twins, the idea of equality, according to Lincoln, was a sheer absurdity. This is in stark contrast to the seductive words of the Gettysburg Address, eleven years later, in which he purported to rededicate the nation to the notion that all men are created equal.

DiLorenzo cites the first joint debate between Lincoln and Stephen Douglas, held in Ottawa,

Illinois, in 1858, as the source of the quotation. The language actually comes from Lincoln's eulogy of his longtime friend and colleague Henry Clay, delivered in July 1852. But that is the least of DiLorenzo's problems. He uses this quotation, and a few other excerpted phrases, to "prove" that Lincoln's professed belief in human equality was disingenuous. Here are Lincoln's actual words:

[There are] a few, but an increasing number of men, who, for the sake of perpetuating slavery, are beginning to assail and to ridicule the white man's charter of freedom, the declaration "that all men are created equal." So far as I have learned, the first American, of any note, to do or attempt this, was the late John C. Calhoun; and if I mistake not, it soon after found its way into some of the messages of the Governors of South Carolina. We, however, look for, and are not much shocked by, political eccentricities and heresies in South Carolina. But, only last year, I saw with astonishment, what purported to be a letter of a very distinguished and influential clergyman of Virginia, copied, with apparent approbation, into a St. Louis newspaper, containing the following, to me, very extraordinary language:

I am fully aware that there is a text in some Bibles that is not in mine. Professional abolitionists have made more use of it, than of any passage in the Bible. It came, however, as I trace it, from Saint Voltaire, and was baptized by Thomas Jefferson, and since almost universally regarded as canonical authority 'All men are born equal and free.'

This is a genuine coin in the political currency of our generation. I am sorry to say that I have never seen two men of whom it is true. But I must admit I never saw the Siamese Twins, and therefore will not dogmatically say that no man ever saw a proof of this sage aphorism.

This sounds strangely in republican America. The like was not heard in the fresher days of the Republic.

DiLorenzo thus attributes to Lincoln the words of a Virginia clergyman whom Lincoln quoted and then went on to criticize. In the course of his eulogy of Clay, Lincoln defended the proposition of human equality and equal natural rights, as he did in all his major addresses. His argument is precisely the opposite of what DiLorenzo claims it to be.

Perhaps even more distorting than the false statements and misrepresentations in the book are the omissions. For a book intended to reveal

the "real" Lincoln, it is astounding how little of Lincoln's political universe DiLorenzo discusses or seems to understand. For example:

➤ DiLorenzo never attempts to explain or account for the natural-rights foundation of American constitutional government, and hence the fundamental problem of slavery, as articulated by nearly all the Founding Fathers. He seems oblivious to the central problem with which Lincoln's statesmanship had to struggle: the problem of combining government by the consent of the governed with the protection of the equal rights of all, when a growing number of the governed denied the rights of others.

➤ Wholly absent is any mention of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the event that propelled Lincoln back into national politics and signaled a turning point in public opinion regarding slavery: from understanding slavery as an evil to be tolerated out of necessity where it existed in the South, to viewing slavery as a morally neutral institution that should be allowed to spread into the territories.

➤ DiLorenzo characterizes John C. Calhoun as a great defender of freedom and constitutional government, based solely on Calhoun's later opposition to tariffs and support for secession. But he never so much as hints at Calhoun's supposedly "scientific" theory of racial hierarchy, which would come to drive the secessionists. According to no less an authority than Confederate Vice President Alexander Stephens, "the great truth that the Negro is not equal to the white man," and that "slavery...is his natural and normal condition" was the "cornerstone" of the Confederate constitution. Calhoun and his Southern followers explicitly rejected the idea of individual natural rights because they explicitly rejected the core teaching of the Declaration of Independence, that all men are created equal. (This is the racism Lincoln was countering in his eulogy of Henry Clay.)

➤ Calhoun divorced the idea of states' rights from natural rights, and invented the doctrine of legal or constitutional "secession" to replace the natural right of revolution as the ground for independence. The South understood that to appeal to the right of revolution, as Jefferson had in the Declaration, was necessarily to appeal to the idea of individual natural rights. Southern leaders balked at such an appeal, because they understood that natural rights flew in the face of their fantastic justifications for slavery. All this is lost on DiLorenzo. (It was also apparently lost on Walter Williams, who wrote the foreword to DiLorenzo's book. It is shameful

that Williams, a black libertarian economist and frequent guest host for Rush Limbaugh, would endorse a book that celebrates John C. Calhoun, who more than anyone in American history made the case for the subjugation of blacks by whites.)

➤ The *Dred Scott* case, which more than any other event divided the Democratic Party and led to Lincoln's election in 1860, is mentioned in precisely two sentences. One incorrectly summarizes the Supreme Court's opinion in the case; the other feebly asserts that Lincoln wanted to talk about *Dred Scott* only as an avenue for championing the nationalization of money.

➤ There is no mention of the Democratic Convention in April 1860, from which the seven states of the Deep South walked out (the first real act of secession) because they refused to accept Stephen Douglas as their candidate for president. Douglas was the champion of the "popular sovereignty" doctrine of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which held that the people of the territories could accept or prohibit slavery as they chose. This was in direct opposition to the Supreme Court's ruling in *Dred Scott*, that a slave owner had a constitutional right to take his slave property into any U.S. territory and that the people of a territory could not violate that right. Standing upon the *Dred Scott* decision, the South demanded federal protection of slave property in the territories, which was nothing less than a demand for the largest expansion of federal government power up to that time in American history. As the historian Don Fehrenbacher (whom DiLorenzo never mentions) has pointed out, the 1860 Democratic Convention in Charleston was the prelude to the "secession winter" of 1860-61: Any Southerner who would not accept Stephen Douglas as the Democratic candidate would never accept Abraham Lincoln as President of the United States.

These examples barely begin to sketch the real political world in which Abraham Lincoln exercised his statesmanship. It is a world of which DiLorenzo appears to be almost wholly ignorant. His unreal Lincoln inhabits an unreal world, so crudely and tendentiously drawn as to beggar belief. One wonders if the libertarian neo-Confederates have run out of front-line troops. In this screed, at any rate, they have sent a giddy, careless, half-educated boy to do a man's job. And it shows.

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UP FROM SLAVERY

Jefferson's Pillow: The Founding Fathers and the Dilemma of Black Patriotism,
by Roger Wilkins. Beacon Press, 163 pages, \$23

WHEN A MEMBER OF THE CHICAGO City Council proposed, about two years ago, that the Pledge of Allegiance be recited at the start of each meeting, one of his colleagues objected. African-Americans, the councilman explained, owed no allegiance to the nation that had enslaved them and considered them only three-fifths of a person. He added that he, as an African-American, considered it an insult *even to suggest* that blacks should be expected to salute the American flag.

At the University of Maryland, a black professor urged her students not to identify themselves as "African-Americans," a sentiment with which I am in complete agreement. But the professor objected to what is on the right side of the hyphen, whereas I object to what is on the left. Her explanation echoed that of the Chicago city councilman. Blacks in America, she said, should consider themselves "Africans," not Americans in any sense of the word.

After the attacks of September 11, 2001, several high-profile blacks convened a "summit" to discuss how their agenda could be brought back to the public's attention. Some suggested that expectations of patriotism from blacks were inappropriate, while others said that America was simply getting what it deserved for its "oppressive" treatment of "people of color." In the words of presidential candidate Al Sharpton: "This is not our fight."

Nowhere does the disdain for America flow as freely as it does in black America. Blacks who express any sense of national pride are often dismissed as "right-wing conservatives," "sell-outs," and "Uncle Toms." *Jefferson's Pillow* is important because it is a soul-searching study of why it is complicated and difficult — and noble — to be a black American patriot.

The great challenge of any writer is to do what he sets out to do. Wilkins, a professor of history at George Mason University, wants to examine how race and the legacy of slavery "impede our progress" as a nation. He is more than equal to the task. Reaching into his own soul as a black man born in America who has experienced the worst of American-style racial discrimination and prejudice and enjoyed the best of American opportunity, he helps the reader understand the conflicts of race that we must all confront.

Wilkins is deeply puzzled by the contradiction in our American heroes who affirmed the "self-

evident truth" that all men are created equal, and yet owned other human beings. How can this be? he asks.

In a clear and truly poignant passage that most blacks *will* understand, and most whites should *learn* to understand, Wilkins states the dilemma for himself and for others like him:

How is one to understand a country whose dreams the slave owners despoiled even as they were creating it? How is a black person to regard a land where his ancestors were meant to serve but not to grow?

As I contemplate the tall, straight figure of Jefferson and think of his colleagues, I am truly in awe of the conundrum they present to me, and of the deep conflict they have laid on my soul.... Because I am black, I can't avoid it, and because I am American, I must confront it.

In the course of his inquiry, Wilkins not only addresses whether Thomas Jefferson fathered children with one of his slaves, Sally Hemings, but he explains the question's significance to blacks. "Many whites have long believed that blacks who try to prove that they are descendants of famous whites are desperately seeking status," he writes. "What blacks really seem to be saying is that we are human, we count, we have been here, and we are tired of lies."

To those who believe that the sole measure of the contribution of blacks to America's history has been to exist passively as slaves, Wilkins offers important insight. "Blacks heard the cry of freedom and inveighed against the attempts of the king to reduce them to 'slavery' and submitted their own natural-rights petitions for freedom." He details the extent of black participation in Washington's armies, and he documents in convincing fashion the role of black Americans in creating freedom and the democratic system that many Americans take for granted.

In reading this book, one does not get the impression that Wilkins is lecturing whites or seeking to stir up "white guilt." He is baring his soul in a way that lays a strong foundation for better understanding between all the major participants in America's never-ending race drama.

There is little doubt that Wilkins and I have opposite views about race-based policies such

as "affirmative action." But I don't hold that difference against him. Rather, I wish every black who sees himself as a victim in American society could read these uplifting passages:

I stood there facing the ocean, with my back to the continent of Africa, and thought about my African cousins and ancestors as I peered out at the horizon...and I knew that no matter how deeply these African memories or the vitality of my African cousins might move me, somewhere over that curve, on the other side of that ocean, was my home.

She [his great-great-grandmother who was a slave] certainly wasn't an African anymore. She didn't look back toward an African past, but rather focused her gaze forward, toward a life of freedom in America — a freedom that she promised her son he would have. Her idea of a better life was a better American life....

George Washington's growth and Great-great-grandmother Jeffries's love and strength are my American stories. I need both of them, as well as my other ancestors and the other patriots, to be who I am and to live the life I have lived.

Like his uncle Roy Wilkins — a civil rights giant in the long march toward freedom for black people — Roger Wilkins is an unapologetic patriot. But he arrived at his patriotism after much study and reflection. "I feel and look American, and I have labored over the years to make the Constitution work for everyone," he writes, wonderingly. Following this statement, he asks, "Does this make me a patriot?" For giving us *Jefferson's Pillow*, Roger Wilkins is, indeed, a patriot in every sense of that word.

It would be a disservice and an inaccuracy to leave the impression that *Jefferson's Pillow* is a "race book." This outstanding work is written not merely for blacks but for all Americans. It is a book of hope and reconciliation.

Ward Connerly is chairman of the American Civil Rights Coalition.

Book Review by Christopher Flannery

STEINBECK IN GOOD CONSCIENCE

America and Americans and Selected Nonfiction, by John Steinbeck,
Edited by Susan Shillinglaw and Jackson J. Benson, Viking, 429 pages, \$27.95



“HARD AS IT IS TO IMAGINE TODAY, there was a time when second-rate propaganda-pushers such as Lillian Hellman and John Steinbeck were widely regarded as major writers.” Thus writes *Commentary* music critic Terry Teachout in the March 25 issue of *The Weekly Standard*, awakening thereby an uneasy conscience in those who have enjoyed or had thought they might enjoy reading John Steinbeck. When Teachout says buy a CD, buy it. Following his musical advice is like obeying the natural law — you cannot go wrong, even if you do not understand it. But in polite recognition of Steinbeck’s centennial year, and in light of the fact that Steinbeck, though a lover of music, was a writer, not a composer, Steinbeck fans and potential fans may be forgiven if they pause for at least a decent interlude before putting his books back on the shelf to gather dust in shame.

To occupy that interlude, several questions suggest themselves: Was Steinbeck really just a “propaganda-pusher”? If so, was he second-rate? And even worse, was he a second-rate propaganda-pusher like Lillian Hellman?

Steinbeck’s reputation is a little complicated, like the history of the country and the world in the decades in which his reputation developed. The earliest responses to *The Grapes of Wrath*, generally considered his *chef-d’oeuvre*, included book bannings, book burnings, and death threats. Steinbeck was charged with obscenity and was even publicly denounced in Congress by Oklahoma(!) Democratic Representative Lyle Boren (father of David): “his book is a lie, a black, infernal creation of a twisted, distorted mind.” On the other hand, or maybe on the same hand, the book stayed on the best-seller list for months on end and continues to sell scores of thousands of copies a year.

That literary lioness of the Left, Mary Mc-

Carthy, writing for *The Nation* in 1936, sneered at Steinbeck’s *In Dubious Battle*, published that year, as “childish” and “infantile,” while most critics across the political spectrum praised the book. McCarthy’s sometime husband, Edmund Wilson — a literary establishment unto himself in mid-century America — never admitted Steinbeck’s writing to the ranks of serious literature. Meanwhile, Steinbeck’s books continued to sell prodigiously throughout the ‘40s and ‘50s and continued to be made into successful Broadway plays and movies.

Steinbeck received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1962, but this seems only to add to the complications — after all, Yasser Arafat would later receive the Nobel Prize for Peace. Some honor. One likes to think that Steinbeck was in a poetic way conscious of the problem. When asked whether he thought he deserved the Nobel, he answered, “Frankly, no.” *The New York Times* emphatically agreed with him, though without any saving grace of irony. Arthur Mizener, writing for the *Times*, insisted that the award had been a terrible error, that Steinbeck’s was a “limited talent,” which, even in his best books, is “watered down by tenth-rate philosophizing.”

In our own time, the Library of America has been reissuing Steinbeck’s works over the past several years, with the latest installment coming out this year. In 1998, the National Steinbeck Center was erected at considerable expense in his home town of Salinas, California, where the locals used to call for the burning of his books. The Center reports some 100,000 visitors a year. In an extended centennial year (Steinbeck was born on February 27, 1902) there is an orgy of events in honor of Steinbeck, sponsored by multitudes of independent groups, spread across dozens of states from Cannery Row in Monterrey, California, to Lincoln Center in New York. Many of

these events take place at colleges and universities, where Steinbeck has not historically been treated very seriously (for a listing of most of these events, visit <http://www.steinbeck100.org/newevents.html>). And, of course, there are still serious aesthetes who consider Steinbeck a second-rate propagandist.

As it turns out, Steinbeck *was* a propagandist, though perhaps not in the way supposed. Steinbeck’s novels of the ‘30s — especially *In Dubious Battle* and *The Grapes of Wrath* — gained for him the dubious and unwanted reputation as a “proletarian” novelist, which stuck to him for decades. Communists and leftists tried to claim him as their own, and he was denounced by the legions of decency as a Jewish propagandist and a Communist propagandist. There is no question but that some of his writings were convenient for the purposes of Communist and leftist propaganda. Nonetheless, Steinbeck’s hatred of Communism and his love of America began to confuse the picture very early on. His patriotic support of America in World War II and the early Cold War years brought from the Left bitter charges of treason, which continued for the rest of his life. These grew especially nasty in the Vietnam era, during which Steinbeck used his fame to give public honor to American soldiers, to defend the essential decency of America’s cause, and to warn against the strategic dangers of Communist expansion. Steinbeck biographer Jackson Benson argues that the Left’s hatred for Steinbeck often manifested itself not merely as political denunciation, but as literary criticism.

WHEN STEINBECK DID SET OUT DELIBERATELY to propagandize, he meant to propagandize on behalf of his own country’s cause. A few months after Pearl Harbor, he published a play-novelette called

The Moon is Down, about a small fictional nation conquered and occupied by a foreign power suspiciously like Nazi Germany. He intended this book to be used as propaganda to boost the morale of the European peoples suffering under Nazi occupation. The book sold well; it was performed successfully on Broadway, and was made into a movie (March 1943). It also incited in America what one writer calls "the most heated literary debate of the Second World War." Eminent American literati savaged the book as bad writing — and worse — bad propaganda. James Thurber argued in *The New Republic* that Steinbeck's effort, far from advancing America's cause, would contribute to Hitler's triumph.

Contrary to this American assessment, the book appears to have had a powerful positive impact on its intended audiences: resistance movements in several occupied European countries. Looking back on the impact of *The Moon is Down*, one Swiss professor wrote that for the European reader this was "the most powerful piece of propaganda ever written to help a small democratic country to resist totalitarian aggression and occupation." Strangely enough, during the later months of the war, while *The Moon is Down* was being circulated by the French underground as anti-Nazi propaganda under the title *Nuits Noires* (Black Nights), Nazi collaborators in France were promoting *In Dubious Battle* as propaganda against America and were preparing to use *Grapes of Wrath* for the same purpose. As Jean-Paul Sartre wrote, Steinbeck was "being acclaimed at the same time by the collaborationists and by the underground." But whatever use might be made of his books, there was no doubt where Steinbeck stood. After the war, the King of Norway awarded Steinbeck a Liberty Cross (an honor otherwise reserved to heroes of the Norwegian resistance) for writing *The Moon is Down*.

If Steinbeck was a propagandist, there are at least some who think he may have been a first-rate one — and not of the Lillian Hellman variety. An episode in the early 1950s suggests a subtle but decisive difference in their characters

and their politics. Steinbeck was a very good friend of Elia Kazan, already a highly successful Broadway and Hollywood director. It happened that Kazan and Hellman were called before the House Un-American Activities Committee at around the same time. As Jackson Benson tells the story: "Kazan talked, Hellman refused, and almost immediately Kazan became the arch-villain and Hellman the arch-heroine of American intellectual circles."

Like many Americans, Steinbeck hated Communism, loved his country, and despised this committee. He was not sure what he would have done or even what he wished he might do had he been called before the committee. But what he did think places him in a different moral-political universe from the fashionable opinion that continues to reign in Hollywood and America a half century later. As he wrote in a private letter in May 1952:

I understand both Hellman and Kazan. Each one is right in different ways but I think Kazan's took more courage. It is very easy to be brave and very hard to be right. Lillian can settle snugly back in a kind of martyrdom but Kazan has to live alone with his decision. I hope I could have had the courage to do what he did.

BUT WAS STEINBECK A "MAJOR WRITER"? *America and Americans and Selected Non-fiction* helps us part-way to an answer. It commemorates Steinbeck's centennial by gathering together selections from several series of his nonfiction articles written for different newspapers and magazines here and abroad, between 1936 and 1966. Some of these have never been collected; most are little-known and long-forgotten. The title of the volume is taken from the title of Steinbeck's last book, *America and Americans*, reprinted here for the first time since its original publication in 1966. For Steinbeck fans with an old copy of *Travels with Charley*, the volume also includes the final chapter of that

book, which Steinbeck chose to exclude (proving his judgment was still sound). This is accurately presented as a "heretofore unpublished" chapter, though a new edition of *Travels* now includes it as an appendix.

This collection reminds us that, as a writer, Steinbeck was in some respects a ham 'n'egger. He would write about almost anything, sometimes for the money, sometimes for the challenge or just the sheer fun of it. He was willing to publish writing that was far less than "major" literature. His last book, which gives this collection its name, was written as commentary to a series of photographs.

The editors plausibly maintain that in Steinbeck's literary journalism, from which these selections are drawn, may be found "more of the whole man...than in any of his novels." This is plausible because Steinbeck was always primarily an observer and reporter of those parts of the human condition that happened to fall within his experience. He wrote literary journalism, and he often wrote journalistic literature. His most famous novel arose from a journalistic study of the conditions of migrant farm workers.

Shillinglaw and Benson are respectful of their subject the way a good friend is respectful — they are grateful for his gifts and fondly aware of his limits and his foibles. This is fitting to Steinbeck, whose best work illuminates with loving realism the glorious and heartbreaking aspirations of fallen men, unredeemed. Steinbeck said of himself, "I find I have to write about little things. I can't write about big things. It never comes out good." When Steinbeck tries to write about big things, he is drawn like destiny to third-hand, if not tenth-rate, philosophizing — it does not come out so good. But if you want to see how a major writer might deal with the little things, take *Tortilla Flat* off the shelf, and see if it does not inscribe its wise and sweet *paisano* sorrow with indelible gallantry on your soul.

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Book Review by Michael Anton

THE MEN BEHIND THE MYSTERIES

Selected Letters of Dashiell Hammett, edited by Richard Layman and Julie Rivett.
Counterpoint Press, 672 pages, \$40

The Raymond Chandler Papers: Selected Letters and Non-Fiction, 1909-1959,
Edited by Frank McShane and Tom Hiney. Atlantic Monthly Press, 288 pages, \$25



INFERIORITY COMPLEXES CAN BE DEBILITATING. But in rare cases they can also be inspiring, or at least motivating.

Consider Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler. Both wrote mysteries, and mysteries are down-market in the literary world — good for making money, but not for garnering prestige. Every writer wants to make money, of course, and the ones who know they're hacks are satisfied by it. But the ones who think well of their abilities can be driven mad by a greed for prestige that makes mere avarice seem moderate.

After years of odd jobs, military service, failed careers, and plenty of liquor, Hammett and Chandler got rich through their writing. But success never made them happy, because neither achieved the *success d'esteem* in the literary world that he thought he deserved.

Chandler kept at it, writing progressively more ambitious books until he ran out of gas and spat out the underwhelming *Playback* the year before he died. Hammett never quite gave up either, but didn't manage to finish a book in the 25 years that followed the publication of *The Thin Man* in 1934. This divergence may be traced to a difference of approach. Chandler never tried to abandon detective fiction, only to expand its literary possibilities, to do within its essential confines more than any mystery writer had ever attempted. Hammett, on the other hand, came to resent and despise the genre, and refused to write within it. So apart from Communist Party propaganda, he never wrote for publication again.

Alas, that didn't stop Hammett's biographer and two members of his family from bringing out a new book — a very large volume of letters. Most are mundane "Hi-how-are-yous" to

family and friends. More than a third were written during Hammett's army service in Alaska during World War II, and these are even more mundane. Another third are written to Lillian Hellman. Considering the legend that has grown up around "Lilly and Dash" — one of the most passionate love affairs of the 20th century, two great minds, two great talents, who never abandoned each other through the tribulations of depression, war, McCarthyite witch hunts, blah, blah, blah — these letters really ought to be far more interesting than they are. Forget literary or philosophic value — they don't even contain good gossip.

BY COINCIDENCE, A NEW VOLUME OF Raymond Chandler's letters (along with some other scribbling) has also been published recently. Strictly speaking, this was unnecessary, as two editions of Chandler's letters had already been issued: the uneven *Raymond Chandler Speaking* in 1962 (reissued in the mid-'90s), and, in 1981, the exhaustive, authoritative *Selected Letters of Raymond Chandler*. The editor justifies this new volume by claiming that he has discovered new material. And indeed he has. But one wishes he could have identified it in some way, for those familiar with the older editions.

In any case, the main effect of *The Raymond Chandler Papers* on anyone who reads it alongside *Selected Letters of Dashiell Hammett* (and many will, for fans of one tend to be fans of the other) is to impress one with how much brighter, wittier, and more learned Chandler was than Hammett.

The Raymond Chandler Papers is the perfect book for anyone who ever wrote a letter, read it over, drew a deep breath, and imagined it being perused with awe some 40 years later by an

industrious hagiographer. It is also the perfect book for anyone romantic about the first half of the 20th century, when heroic consumption of alcohol was *de rigueur* for the serious writer. Most people who've tried writing while drinking can recall scribbling something in an alcoholic haze, thinking it the most profound thing ever, only to realize in the unforgiving light of a hangover that it's utter drivel. Chandler wrote most of his letters drunk. And they easily pass the sobriety test.

"I have written letters that would have made Eros hysterical and I have also written long serious letters on literary technique as well as I understand it," Chandler once wrote to Hamish "Jamie" Hamilton, his publisher and frequent correspondent, who had suggested bringing out an edition of the letters. "It is true that in letters I sometimes seem to have been more penetrating than in any other kind of writing — at times — and that as I reread some of them, I really am astonished — astonished at the facility of expressions and at the range of thought I seemed to show even when I was a struggling beginner."

This is not bluster; the letters really are that good. They amply demonstrate that Chandler deserved the prestige he craved but that eluded him in this country (though not in Britain). Of course, his novels should have accomplished that all on their own. But critics have a hard time getting around their prejudices. To them a mystery is a mystery, period.

Hammett fared somewhat better. In retrospect, it's easy to see that whatever reputation he managed to cultivate in the highbrow world was due more to his radical politics and the company he kept than to genuine admiration for his works.

His books were all published in the late '20s and early '30s. But the peak of his modest esteem came when, in 1951, he went to jail for refusing to disclose the whereabouts of 11 Communists (convicted of advocating the overthrow of the U.S. government) for whom Hammett's Communist-front organization, the Civil Rights Congress, had posted bail. As a matter of fact, Hammett refused even to confirm his own name.

HAMMETT, AS HIS LETTERS MAKE CLEAR, never did get over his illusions about Stalin, or about Communism. Chandler, on the other hand, had none to shed. He once rebuked his leftist friend, James Sandoe: "You and I had better leave politics alone, since I am the reactionary type, who thinks that the only reason Uncle Dzhugashvili has no extermination camps is that he is still trying to find out how to get 50,000 miles out of a truck without greasing it."

Of course, Uncle Joe did have camps. Chandler can be forgiven for not knowing because he didn't pay much attention to politics, and he was never a Communist. But Hammett really had no excuse for believing, as he wrote to his daughter, that "the Communist Party does not now and never has advocated the overthrow of the United States Government by force or violence. Their (sic) stand on overthrowing governments is pret-

ty much the same as Lincoln's — that you only use force and violence when most of the people want a change and the few in power won't give it to them peaceably."

Chandler, though, had his own illusions, one of which is vetted in embarrassing detail in an interview he conducted with Lucky Luciano in Naples. Here it is, published for the first time. It makes for sad reading, for it only serves as proof that something toward the end had gone wrong in Chandler's extraordinarily sharp mind. The piece ends, "If Luciano is an evil man, then I am an idiot." This may be the most off-key sentence Chandler ever wrote, for Luciano surely was evil, and Chandler surely was not an idiot. Yet only someone in the grip of idiocy could have written an article called "My friend Luco."

So what did these twin pillars of the "hard-boiled" style think of each other? It's worth noting that they met once, in Los Angeles in the mid-1930s, at a party for current and former writers for *Black Mask* magazine — in terms of prestige and purse power, *The New Yorker* of the pulps. Aside from the fact that both men got uproariously drunk, no details of the encounter survive.

Hammett mentions Chandler only once, to praising his classic *Atlantic Monthly* essay, "The Simple Art of Murder" (which, not coincidentally, singles out Hammett as the best mystery writer of the age). For Chandler, Hammett was a liter-

ary hero who shook the mystery genre free of its aristocratic English pretensions and "took murder out of the Venetian vase and dropped it into the alley.... Hammett gave murder back to the kind of people who do it for a reason, not just to provide a corpse; and with means at hand, not with hand-wrought dueling pistols, curare, and tropical fish." Chandler repeatedly singles out *The Maltese Falcon* for praise, which makes sense, because it was Hammett's best book — the only one, perhaps, that deserves to live on. Chandler's best-plotted book, *Farewell My Lovely*, owes much to *The Maltese Falcon's* exquisite twists and turns.

But *The Long Goodbye*, Chandler's best work, takes the character of Philip Marlowe much further than Hammett ever attempted with Sam Spade, or any of his characters. Here the gulf in their relative strengths as writers becomes apparent. With *The Long Goodbye*, Chandler accomplished what both men dreamed of: he wrote a serious novel worthy of taking its place on the shelves of serious literature. If in his lifetime he didn't get the credit he deserved, at least his fans can take pleasure in knowing that some measure has accrued to him posthumously. And the more people read his witty, wide-ranging, and erudite letters, the more his reputation will rise.

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Book Review by Glenn Ellmers

IT'S OVER, ALREADY

The Unfinished Election of 2000, edited by Jack N. Rakove.
Basic Books, 266 pages, \$25

SIX LIBERAL ACADEMICS CONTRIBUTE TO yet another rearguard action in the Bush vs. Gore contest of 2000. Of the six, two — John Milton Cooper, Jr. of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and editor Jack N. Rakove of Stanford — signed the famous *New York Times* letter claiming that the impeachment of Bill Clinton would "leave the Presidency permanently disfigured and diminished." That keen perceptiveness is again on display here.

Cooper's essay is a workmanlike look at critical elections and partisan allegiance. He alleges that Republicans have historically been the party of "victory at all costs," while Democrats, by contrast, have usually approached politics more like sports or business and less like war." Maybe by sports and business he means bare-knuckle boxing and Murder, Inc.

Most of the other essays bemoan the U.S. Supreme Court's euthanasia of the chad. That decision, Stephen Holmes argues in the afterword, "seems finally to have persuaded liberals to shed their last illusions about the progressive potential of judicial review." Let's hope so.

No such collection would be complete without a swipe at the electoral college. The tedious duty falls to Rakove, a major figure among contemporary American historians. When his book *Original Meanings: Politics and Ideas in the Making of the Constitution* — which argues that the Constitution has no original intent — won the Pulitzer Prize in 1997, he described it as "the standard work for historians about the framing and ratification of the Constitution." (It isn't.) His essay here is definitely substandard. Defenders of the college often explain how it strengthens the

two-party system. Forcing candidates to win entire states and assemble broad national majorities suppresses the influence of extremist parties and "spoiler" candidates. Similarly, the "winner take all" system encourages candidates to leave their bases and compete for the undecided middle. Far from refuting these important arguments, Rakove hardly even seems aware of them. Evidently, he did not read the Winter 2001 issue of the *CRB*, in which Michael Uhlmann patiently explained the true history, purpose, and merits of the college.

Better books on the 2000 election are *The Perfect Tie* by James W. Ceaser and Andrew E. Busch and *Bush v. Gore: The Court Cases and the Commentary*, edited by E.J. Dionne and William Kristol.

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Book Review by James F. Pontuso

ASCENT FROM EXILE

Solzhenitsyn: A Soul in Exile,
by Joseph Pearce. Baker Books, 334 pages, \$19.95

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn: The Ascent from Ideology,
by Daniel J. Mahoney. Rowman & Littlefield, 200 pages, \$21.95



ALEKSANDR SOLZHENITSYN IS ALMOST a forgotten man, as much a relic of the Cold War as a broken bit of the Berlin Wall. He is also one of the most important writers of the twentieth century, and has had more direct influence on politics than any other author since Jean Jacques Rousseau.

When I was in college in the 1960s, Marxism was considered a viable, even worthy, successor to liberal democracy. Che Guevara and Mao Tse-tung were heroes to many of my peers. I recall one weekend seminar when the political union at my university discussed what would happen “after the revolution.” We all took it for granted that the overthrow of capitalism was inevitable. But the publication of *The Gulag Archipelago* in the early 1970s sounded Marxism’s death knell. Solzhenitsyn showed with stunning clarity how Marx’s ideas would cause Communism to slide inevitably into totalitarianism. It is no coincidence that after Solzhenitsyn’s revelations were published, the once-powerful Communist Parties of Western Europe lost their rank and file; intellectuals, especially in France, abandoned hope of radically reforming political life and moved on to literary criticism; and voters in Germany, France, Great Britain, and the United States elected the most fiercely anti-Communist leaders of the Cold War era.

Solzhenitsyn gets almost no credit for these achievements, either in the popular press or in intellectual circles. He has been called a religious fanatic similar to the Ayatollah Khomeini, an anti-Semite, and a Russian nationalist blind to the merits of the West. And since the collapse of Communism, which Solzhenitsyn helped engineer, the world’s most controversial writer has suffered another kind of ignominy: neglect. His writings have largely been ignored as Russia — along with the rest of the world — plunged headlong into an exuberant materialism to reap the profits made available by the opening of global markets.

Joseph Pearce’s *Solzhenitsyn: A Soul in Exile* and Daniel J. Mahoney’s *Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn: The Ascent from Ideology* prompt us neither to neglect nor misconstrue Solzhenitsyn’s ideas even in the post-Communist world.

Pearce’s biography is not as comprehensive as Michael Scammell’s out-of-print 1984 opus, *Solzhenitsyn: A Biography*. But it is more probing, largely because Pearce, a writer whose previous work includes biographies of J.R.R. Tolkien and G.K. Chesterton, was able to interview Solzhenitsyn and his sons. *A Soul in Exile* highlights the extraordinary genius of Solzhenitsyn, recounting how he committed huge sections of *The Gulag Archipelago* to memory, fearing that a written version could be seized by the secret police. Pearce describes Solzhenitsyn’s superhuman stamina — he often wrote for two eight-hour stretches per day, sleeping only a few hours between sessions. Solzhenitsyn’s vast literary output seems to have been aimed not only at destroying the Soviet Union but also at rewriting Russian history in order to counter the widely accepted scholarly view that Soviet totalitarianism was more the result of the Russian national character than of Communist ideology.

Pearce demonstrates how many of Solzhenitsyn’s much-derided predictions prior to the fall of Communism have come true. Solzhenitsyn anticipated that Communism would disintegrate, that the criminal element nurtured in the Gulag would take control of Russia’s economy, that members of the KGB and the criminal elements were actually the same people, and that it would take one hundred years for Russia to recover from Communism. Soviet experts in the West scoffed at these prognostications. Who’s laughing now?

Most important of all, Pearce argues that Solzhenitsyn’s highest goal in his writing was not political, but spiritual. Solzhenitsyn provokes people to consider their moral responsibilities to

others and their personal responsibility for the development of their souls.

The Pearce biography includes lovely prose poems that Solzhenitsyn wrote after his return to Russia. The poems give us a glimpse of old age and of a personal reconciliation with death. It is almost as if Solzhenitsyn’s body is in this world, but his spirit is reaching to experience the next.

Pearce argues that Solzhenitsyn’s views derive almost exclusively from Christianity. Yet, in *The First Circle*, Solzhenitsyn portrays himself — in the character of Gleb Nerzhin — not as a Christian, but as a Socratic. Nerzhin even calls himself a student of Socrates. He asks everybody “What is...?” questions. Although he admires people of faith, Nerzhin does not seem to share their views. Furthermore, in the central part of the central book of the *Gulag*, Solzhenitsyn tells the story of a camp inmate who pretends to be a religious fanatic because it frightens Communist authorities. Solzhenitsyn then asks rhetorically if this is not the proper way to combat Communism. What would a Socratic do when confronted with the evil of the 20th century? In his one public appearance, Socrates regularly makes reference to religion and religious symbols. He swears by Zeus within the first few lines of the *Apology*. Solzhenitsyn’s “philosophic” writings refer to Machiavelli, Hobbes, Rousseau, Marx, and Nietzsche, but nowhere does he rest his political analysis on the authority of the Bible.

DANIEL MAHONEY’S *Ascent from Ideology* gives a broader view of Solzhenitsyn’s principles and places them somewhere, as it were, between Athens and Jerusalem. Mahoney shows that although Solzhenitsyn may be a Russian nationalist, his views derive from a deep understanding of the philosophic roots of Western culture. Mahoney demonstrates that Solzhenitsyn’s most forceful criticisms of the West — made not long after America’s defeat in Vietnam — were not meant to undermine

but rather to strengthen its resolve to defend its highest aspirations.

The scholarship in *Ascent from Ideology* is meticulous and superb. A professor of political philosophy at Assumption College whose previous books include studies of Pierre Manent and Charles de Gaulle, Mahoney is well versed in what might be called "the Solzhenitsyn debate," carried out in French- and English-language academic journals. With the help of Alexis Klimoff — Solzhenitsyn's confidant and translator — he displays an impressive command of the intricacies of contemporary Russian intellectual thought. Mahoney argues that Solzhenitsyn's writings have continuing and universal relevance in the contemporary world. Far from being a vestige of the Cold War, Solzhenitsyn's work is a reminder of all that is moral, prudent, and noble in the human spirit.

Of particular merit is Mahoney's chapter on Pyotr Stolypin, prime minister of Russia from 1906 until 1911, who might be called the "hero" of Solzhenitsyn's *Red Wheel*. Stolypin, a liberal who nevertheless admired Russia's ancient culture, attempted to reform his nation's semi-feudal political and economic practices while at the same time preserving the old customs and habits that were the bonds tying Russian society together. Stolypin was the only Russian statesman who understood the delicate balance between the old and the new — between conservation and change. His assassination led to the fall of the Tsar, the victory of Bolshevism, and the murder of millions of innocent people crushed under the relentless and inhuman *Red Wheel*.

Had Solzhenitsyn been the kind of man who cherished popularity, he would have paid a heavy price for insisting that human beings have

souls and that the soul is more valuable than any material possessions. He certainly has been excoriated for attacking Western materialism, and for urging the proper use of freedom. Not long after the terrorist attacks on the Pentagon and World Trade Center, however, the media reported that stores were empty; Americans just did not feel like shopping. Yet churches were full; people claimed that they had been confronted with their own mortality, some for the first time. Within a short time after the attack, all the people I know called their loved ones. Perhaps they called because, as Socrates once argued, love is one of the soul's connections to the eternal.

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Book Review by Kenneth Lloyd Billingsley

SEEING RED

Commies: A Journey Through the Old Left, the New Left, and the Leftover Left,
by Ronald Radosh. Encounter Books, 205 pages, \$24.95

A Very Dangerous Citizen: Abraham Lincoln Polonsky and the Hollywood Left,
by Paul Buhle and Dave Wagner. University of California Press, 282 pages, \$27.50

Red Scared: The Commie Menace in Propaganda and Popular Culture,
by Michael Barson and Steven Heller. Chronicle Books, 162 pages, \$22.95

Commies SHOULD HAVE APPEARED LONG ago but proves well worth the wait. Like Sidney Hook's *Out of Step*, it is the personal odyssey of an honest mind coping with left-wing illusions and it provides, to boot, a useful directory of key players on the Left.

A one-time member of the Communist Party USA, Ron Radosh was familiar with many of the Old Left stalwarts, and went to school with a veritable who's-who of the Left: Victor Navasky of *The Nation*; CPUSA vice-presidential candidate Angela Davis, punctiliously referred to in the media as a "social activist"; Weatherman Kathy Boudin; and the sons of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg.

Radosh is a veteran of Camp Woodland for Children, which he dubs "commie camp." Singer Paul Robeson, a leading apologist for Stalin, performed there. So did Pete Seeger, the banjo Bolshevik himself, later honored by President Bill Clinton. In few other books will one find a recollection of the left-wing anti-comic cam-

paign of the 1950s, or of Birobidzhan, Stalin's bogus homeland for the Jews. Radosh helpfully includes Seeger's lyrics in praise of Birobidzhan.

Seeger, in fact, was one of the Communist Party's "artists in uniform," who believed that "songs are weapons." Seeger was a hero to Radosh, but that does not stop him from recalling Seeger's slavish defense of Stalin. Radosh reminds us that Seeger's *Songs for John Doe*, an album he made with the Almanac Singers during the Nazi-Soviet Pact, was swiftly recalled when the Party line changed from "peace" to outright jingoism.

Radosh learned his boyhood lessons well. He became part of the left-wing vanguard at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, a movement whose veterans are still making trouble. They include Tom Hayden, who proclaimed that anti-Communism was "the moral equivalent of rape," and *Los Angeles Times* columnist Bob Scheer, who breathlessly told Radosh in a radio interview that utopia had been realized in

North Korea. Bob Cohen, another of Radosh's comrades, candidly confessed that "we don't want peace in Korea, we want the North Koreans to win." In similar style, television producer Danny Schechter wore a tee-shirt proclaiming, "We won in Vietnam and Cambodia."

Radosh's withdrawal from these ranks began with one of the defining events of his life, the execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg on June 19, 1953. It was an article of faith on the Left that the Rosenbergs were innocent victims of a reactionary, xenophobic, anti-Semitic America. Nearly two decades later, Radosh set out to make the definitive case in the Rosenberg's favor, but wound up convinced of their guilt. *The Rosenberg File*, written with Joyce Milton, proves beyond doubt that Julius Rosenberg was a Stalinist spy and that Ethel was his accomplice.

The Left quickly denounced Radosh as a heretic. Leading the charge was Marxist historian Eric Foner of Columbia University. But

the response of Michael Harrington, America's leading socialist, also proved revealing. "I always knew they were guilty," he said, "but we're trying to get former Communists who have left the party but are still pro-Soviet into our organization, and I can't do anything to alienate them." The same kind of doublethink prompted Communist Party executive Dorothy Healey to tell Radosh how the Soviet Union generously funded the CPUSA — "How do you think the CP bought its building on West 23rd Street?" — and then threaten to sue when he repeated the exchange in a review of her book.

Exposing the Rosenberg's guilt was not politically correct, and the Left never forgave Radosh, who was willing to follow the truth wherever it led. "The reaction to *The Rosenberg File* made me finally move on to consider the ultimate heresy: perhaps the Left was wrong not just about the Rosenberg case, but about most everything else." The present book, which contains some funny vignettes about Bob Dylan and Bianca Jagger, confirms that the Left has always been a kind of hate group. "Today's Left has no Soviet Union as a beacon," Radosh notes, "but its reflexive hatred of the American system is intact."

RADOSH MENTIONS PAUL BUHLE, CO-AUTHOR with Dave Wagner of *A Very Dangerous Citizen*. In previous works, Buhle glorified the activity of Communist students at the University of Wisconsin and, says Radosh, "read me out of its history entirely, in typical Soviet fashion." At a meeting of the Organization of American Historians, Buhle told Radosh, "You really are a running dog of imperialism, aren't you?"

So it should come as no surprise that Buhle and his current collaborator write in fidelity to the Old Left dogma that Marxists were not only politically correct, but superior artists and writers. The studios' refusal to hire Stalinists and fellow travelers during the 1950s, therefore, meant an incalculable loss to American cinema, which cranked out only mindless fluff and anti-

Communist potboilers instead of the "socially conscious" material the Communist scribes could have provided.

The hero of Buhle's tale is the late Abe Polonsky, a journeyman screenwriter and director whose "Body and Soul" (1947) and "Force of Evil" (1948), say Buhle and Wagner, "quite simply embody the highest achievement of the American Left in cinema before the onset of oppression." A major element of this hagiographical work is the testimonials from Hollywood leftists who say that Polonsky was a brilliant guy. But readers outside of that circle are not likely to be persuaded. The effort is rather like a revisionist biography of, say, Bucky Dent, lamenting his absence from the Hall of Fame as a sign of Major League Baseball's corruption.

Polonsky wrote the original script for "Guilty by Suspicion," which the authors call "blacklist boilerplate." That is also the genre of *A Very Dangerous Citizen*, part of the Left's literature of lost causes. From comments they make about the Pumpkin Papers, it is evident that Buhle and Wagner still believe Alger Hiss was innocent. Readers are even told that Khrushchev in 1956 revealed "Stalin's massive wrongdoings," rather than his mass atrocities.

Blacklist boilerplate is a kind of western featuring evil politicians, anti-Communist desperados, and venal studio bosses riding herd on noble Communist artists and writers, who, we are told, "believed in defeating fascism, racism, and anti-Semitism." Actually, during the Nazi-Soviet Pact they were effectively pro-fascist and against the Allies. They also kept silent in the face of Stalinist anti-Semitism. The authors do mention Stalin's show trials, "which Polonsky, like many Communists, privately considered catastrophic but did not publicly protest."

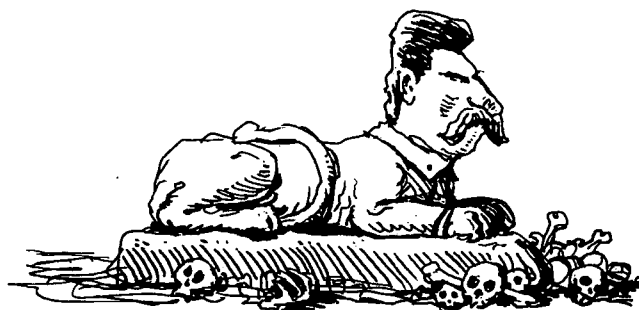
I've been on panels with Abe Polonsky and agree that he was a genial and witty man. But he should be remembered not as a misunderstood genius but as one who chose to remain shrink-wrapped in the illusions of the Left while others, such as Yves Montand and Elia Kazan, courageously spoke out.

IN *Red Scared*, MICHAEL BARSON AND STEVEN Heller want to trivialize the "commie menace," but give the game away early on: "While *Red Scared* is not an apology for the real Soviet menace which (with the cooperation of the U.S., it must be admitted) did threaten the world with atomic conflagration...." Anti-Communist propaganda was so effective, they say, "that Americans shamefully relinquished basic rights and liberties so that the government could persecute its opponents. Talk about un-American!" Communist front groups abounded in America, but the authors pooh-pooh them as "so-called Communist front organizations."

Readers learn that Stalin killed thousands, not millions. *Red Scared* also deploys the fevered vocabulary of blacklist boilerplate — "virulent" anti-Communism, "red-baiting," and, of course, "witch hunting." But the authors' premise prevents them from providing much valuable analysis.

Red Scared's collection of movie posters and magazine and book covers, particularly those featuring Stalin, confirm that there was indeed much to be concerned about. This gives *Red Scared* some value as a reference book, though it will likely wind up on coffee tables. Its list of Cold War movies includes "Escape From East Berlin" but omits Disney's "Night Crossing," about a family that flies to the West in a hot-air balloon, and in which actor John Hurt calls East German Communists "pigs," a cinema first. Barson and Heller also skip "The Confession," by Costa Gavras, about the anti-Semitic show trials in Czechoslovakia (the ones Abe Polonsky remained silent about) and "Eleni," in which John Malkovich hunts down the Communists who murdered his mother. On the other hand, the authors refer to Eugene Lyons's *The Red Decade*, and Robert Conquest's *Stalin: Breaker of Nations*, which everyone ought to read before picking up *Red Scared* or *A Very Dangerous Citizen*.

Kenneth Lloyd Billingsley is author of *Hollywood Party: How Communism Seduced the American Film Industry During the 1930s and 1940s* (Prima).



Book Review by Julie Ann Ponzi

THE SECRET INGREDIENT IS LOVE

Love and Economics: Why the Laissez-Faire Family Doesn't Work,
by Jennifer Roback Morse. Spence Publishing, 273 pages, \$27.95



THE CENTRAL FACT OF THE HUMAN CONDITION, argues Jennifer Roback Morse, is that we are all born helpless babies. Her maternal reflections on this fact lead the formerly staunch libertarian to question the adequacy of libertarian doctrine for understanding social or political life. Supplementing her training in free-market economics with her experience as a mother, Morse discovers the libertarians' missing ingredient: Love.

As any mother can tell you, infants, though savages, are hardly noble. They are, in Morse's words "totally self-centered, impulsive and demanding." Naturally — they are incapable of supplying even the most basic of their own needs. Newborns, of course, cannot even manage to hold up their own heads for several weeks. So what is it that compels adults to attend to the needs of these helpless tyrants? Why do we take on the great burdens and costs of child rearing? Morse argues that strict libertarianism, with its emphasis on cost-benefit analysis, is powerless to answer these questions. Further, by answering these questions, we see the impracticality of social policies wholly derived from libertarian thinking.

It is love for our children that compels us to take on the great burden of raising them — love, minimally defined by Morse as "to will the good of another." A professor of mine once told a story of his Jewish grandfather who always said that the purpose of marriage is to raise the children well. We can see the sense in this and glimpse the beginnings of society if we consider the care an infant requires. Clearly, a single mother without the aid of civilization would have had an impossible time of it. She would need help to meet the most basic human needs: Enter the father — and welcome to the family.

But what happens when there are many families? How does one continue to raise one's children well amid so many strangers who harbor no special feelings toward these children?

Political societies form for the protection of the family. According to Morse, it is not enough to say that the ends of politics are the protection of life and property. This is insufficient because it ignores the higher ends for the sake of which the family and political society come into being — the good of our children and the love that serves that good.

If our families and our political society exist because of the love we have for our children, clearly we are doing much today that needs fixing. Morse, however, draws a careful distinction between the policies and practices she thinks are merely inconsistent with this love and therefore wrong and those that are both wrong and should be considered unlawful.

As a libertarian economist Morse says, "I do not set up as an ideal a world in which the government has unlimited power to create good people out of bad beginnings, or to control the outcomes of personal decisions, or to create a good society." She says, rather, that her aspiration is a world in which objectively moral conduct is acknowledged and supported by the vast majority of society and reinforced by government in the most basic and reasonable ways. As a proponent of this ethic of love, on the other hand, she argues:

[A]dvocates of minimal government need to take the issues surrounding marriage and family seriously. Children who do not receive the necessary adult help in maturing may very well become the types of people who cannot participate in a free and open society. Every society has a number of such people, to be sure. But if we embrace ideas about marriage and family that produce a large enough number of such people, a free society will not be able to absorb them all without damaging its basic institutions of minimally regulated

markets and popular political participation.

Concluding her book with a kind of cost-benefit analysis on the decision to love, Morse makes clear her own belief that reinvigorating our understanding of love is the key to alleviating much of the social pathology that has afflicted American family life for the last 30 years or so. She also thinks it is the way to preserve our very nature as a free people. We have to come to see that love is a sentiment in accordance with and not in competition with reason. And this means that we must recover the fullness of reason that is lost in the truncated, calculating, self-interested "reason" of libertarianism.

The merits of *Love and Economics* certainly outweigh its deficiencies. But Morse's virtues as an author are also vices. The thesis with which she begins the book — on the origins and ends of political life — is so ambitious that the reader is almost sure to be disappointed by what follows. If a hard-core discussion of political philosophy is what you are looking for, you won't find it here. Morse is an economist; had she been anything else the title would have been (and it should have been) *Love and Politics*.

But what Morse lacks as a student of political philosophy she makes up for with her experience as a mother. The best material in this book is anecdotal, which some may count as a strike against her. But being anecdotal is also what makes it good, original, and thoughtful. Aristotle, Locke, and the rest of the boys taught me a lot about politics, to be sure. But what serious student of politics who also happens to be a mother could honestly say she didn't learn something more from her own children — particularly when the question is about the role of love in politics?

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Book Review by James H. Nichols, Jr.

GOD AND MAMMON

Economics as Religion: From Samuelson to Chicago and Beyond,
by Robert H. Nelson. Pennsylvania State University Press, 378 pages, \$35

PITY THE POOR ECONOMISTS. THESE social scientists just want to conduct their professional researches and win a modicum of respect. Yet now Robert H. Nelson argues that they are really theologians, though mostly unaware of the fact, in his thoughtful and challenging new book, *Economics as Religion: From Samuelson to Chicago and Beyond*. We may temper our pity, however, by the reflection that, whatever its difficulties, economics still displays more self-confidence and unity than any other social science.

Nelson is not attacking economics by calling it theological. Rather, he is arguing that the study of economics — whether the progressive variant of Paul Samuelson and his followers, the Chicago school, or the new institutional economics — rests on certain fundamental evaluations or value commitments. These, Nelson asserts, can best be understood as elements of religion, and the discursive elaboration of them can properly be called theology. The premise at work here is that religion is the source or foundation of the ultimate value commitments by which we lead our lives, including what things we study and how we study them.

Once we recognize great advantages to be had from a market system — and Nelson argues that the basic advantages of a market were understood well before Adam Smith, perhaps even in medieval times — any coherent thought about economics will have to deal with the fundamental market paradox. On the one hand, the market supposes, and encourages, people to act in pursuit of their individual self-interest. In Smith's famous words: "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages." On the other hand, the system will not work well if all people pursue self-interest in all situations: judges, for example, should enforce laws and contracts impartially rather than pursue their own self-interest as presented, say, by the highest bribe. Nelson's thesis is that economics in the narrowest technical sense cannot solve this dilemma. What can solve it is religion, which can permit the pursuit of self-interest in dealings that appropriately belong in the market but can forbid actions like deception and theft while promoting, in a deliberate sense, concern for our fellows and for the common good. Economics more broadly is

a kind of secular religion that handles this market paradox through exhorting us on to an improved condition of life on earth through devotion to economic efficiency.

But not all economists are of the same faith, and Nelson takes the reader on a tour of the dismal science's pantheon. He compares the progressive economics of Paul Samuelson and John Maynard Keynes to the Catholic Church. Economic laymen spend most of their time in market activities, rationally pursuing their self-interests, just as the Catholic clergy recognizes that most of us will marry, have children, and devote ourselves mainly to this-worldly activities. But even as priests are needed to look after the higher goal of salvation, so the progressives argue, experts are needed — none more so than economists — to look after the comprehensive, long-range common good, which includes fine-tuning of the economy, honing governmental regulations, and the like.

BY CONTRAST, THE CHICAGO SCHOOL, originating from the influence of Frank Knight, embodied the Protestant, Calvinist sense that all human beings equally share in a fallen human nature, whose commonest expression is pursuit of self-interest. No superior class can be relied upon to pursue the common good, leaving the rest of us to spend our lives in eager pursuit of narrower self-interest. Therefore, the Chicago economists rejected the hope that politicians, or bureaucrats, or regulators — or economists in office — would solve the market paradox through their higher vocation. Instead, the use of coercive power must be restricted and the realm of the free market must be extended, as much as possible. But when we all pursue our narrow self-interests, Nelson asks, who will take care of the necessary conditions for the market to function well? Later developments in the Chicago school, which seek to extend the explanation of self-interest into every area of human behavior — even marriage and the family — make this problem all the more acute.

The new institutional economics addresses problems that were downplayed or by-passed in previous approaches. As Nelson puts it, whereas earlier Chicago economists tended to show why market transactions lead to unambiguous improvements, institutional economists focus on how these transactions take place, and especially on what tends to burden, obstruct, or distort them: asymmetrical information, opportunism,

and the like. From such considerations, it turns out that what may matter most for a market's promotion of prosperity could well be cultural factors — beliefs, practices, virtues, and habits that produce and maintain trust, for example. If so, one can easily see that religion might indeed be the most important factor for economic success; and if economists are truly to understand their subject, they must understand culture and religion.

Although Nelson makes a strong case that economics cannot be a purely positive science of the sort that social science methodologists of the 1950s argued for, it is less clear why he seems to conclude that economics must therefore be a kind of religion, rather than saying that it is, or implies, a certain political or moral philosophy.

Perhaps he believes that positive or technical science is the only fully rational exercise of human reason. If so, then the value commitments underlying any particular employment of reason would rest on something distinct from reasoning: on feeling, emotion, religion, ideology, habituation, or whatever. Since by hypothesis all these would lack full rationality, Nelson may figure that he can invoke them all with the term *religion*. In my judgment, this would be an unfortunate decision to take, because it would discourage responsible efforts to distinguish better from worse reasoning in support of competing values.

In the final analysis, however, Nelson is more sensible. He seems content to urge economists, if they are to be better theologians, to learn the grounds of theological argumentation; to learn to distinguish better from worse arguments in theology. The path to this learning, I believe Nelson suggests, is philosophy. Accordingly, Nelson ends his book with the speculation that Frank Knight may turn out to be the most important economist of the twentieth century. Frank Knight was always a professor of philosophy and economics, and philosophy was always somehow first for him. Nelson worries that Knight's bleak Calvinist view of human nature might not go over well with Americans. But if Knight's philosophical views should prove sound, that concern could simply mean that his philosophical teaching needs to be presented in an appropriately rhetorical manner. It would not be the first time that rhetoric engaged in beneficial cooperation with philosophy.

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BOOKS IN BRIEF



The Anatomy of Racial Inequality,
by Glenn C. Loury. Harvard University Press,
240 pages, \$22.95

Nigger: The Strange Career of a Troublesome Word,
by Randall Kennedy. Pantheon Books,
226 pages, \$22



Two recent books on race remind us how difficult it is to have a principled discussion of the subject. Condemned by conservatives and hailed by reliably leftist scholars, Glenn Loury's latest book merits a discussion far different from what it has received so far. Loury hasn't betrayed conservatism (in truth, he was never much of a conservative) so much as reverted to his economist roots and returned to "social choice" theory. In this jargon-ridden revision of academic lectures, he advocates "race-egalitarianism," a narrowing of group differences that he contrasts with "color-blindness."

Loury's principal goal, which appears to be legitimizing race-conscious public policies, rests on the interrelated arguments that blacks are not essentially inferior to others, that perceptions of inferiority (e.g., a tendency to criminality) can distort and exacerbate the situation, and that liberal individualism and color-blindness are insufficient to meet the challenge. Thus, Loury pleads for nuance in a world dominated by ideologies.

Of course, much of his account is already common sense for Americans of good will: They distinguish readily between pathetic beneficiaries of racial preference policies and those who are truly meritorious. But for conservatives who take seriously the Declaration of Independence's principles of equality of rights and limited government, Loury's arguments are readily met. Justice Harlan's "color-blind Constitution" dissent in *Plessy v. Ferguson* answers many of Loury's charges: color-blindness is just the beginning of an argument about citizenship — its rights and responsibilities — and republican government.

Though he cannot be called a conservative, Harvard law professor Randall Kennedy's astute commentaries on race have earned him criticism from the conventional Left. *Nigger* continues in this vein. The book is a sober attempt to demystify the word, by giving its history, a legal analysis (can its use be a tort?), and an assessment of frequently hysterical reactions to it. As a pathologist of the opprobrious word, Kennedy

unearths jarring facts, such as the original title of Agatha Christie's mystery: *Ten Little Niggers*. Yet Kennedy would not attempt to eliminate the force of the slur. Its magical powers should be respected, albeit narrowed. We should keep in mind Frederick Douglass, who would not use, tolerate, or be crushed by the term. But a slur is scarcely speech any more than pornography. That this is a book no conservative would have been permitted to publish or discuss thoughtfully in a classroom is the real scandal of speech about race in America today. —Ken Masugi



Life at the Bottom:
The Worldview That Makes the Underclass,
by Theodore Dalrymple. Ivan R. Dee, 282
pages, \$27.50

Citymaking: Building Community
Without Building Walls, by Gerald E. Frug.
Princeton University Press, 272 pages,
\$15.95 (paper)



Dalrymple, a British prison doctor writing pseudonymously, has collected his essays from the Manhattan Institute's *City Journal* into a powerful book on how intellectuals helped produce the British "underclass" — that largely white though increasingly immigrant group — violent, vulgar, and virtually doomed to failure. "In fact most of the social pathology exhibited by the underclass has its origin in ideas that have filtered down from the intelligentsia," Dalrymple writes. These ideas include sexual liberation, feminism, dumbed-down public education, the loosening of moral responsibility via the all-purpose excuses of poverty and racism — in other words, the whole plate of postmodern nihilism.

A rich example of Dalrymple's contention that bizarre theory has influenced practice is Harvard law professor Gerald Frug's *Citymaking*. After two insightful chapters on the powerlessness of cities in American political thought, the book takes on a postmodern dimension. The late David Broyles once argued that the postmodern Left is the true heir of the Anti-Federalists. This book vindicates this *aperçu*, as we see Frug's attempt to transcend the "situated subject" and construct "ageographical cities" via "community building."

Implicit in all this is the end of the "bourgeois" concept of rights and the transformation of citizens into powerless products of society.

Inevitably, law professors would be in charge. All this reconstruction is necessitated by the problems of the 11 million blacks living in "urban ghettos — less than 5 percent of the country's urbanized population." To justify his astounding leaps, Frug observes, "Romantic images have considerable practical effect." We see such effects on display in Dalrymple's "underclass." —KM



Writings on Empire and Slavery,
by Alexis de Tocqueville, edited and
translated by Jennifer Pitts. Johns Hopkins
University Press, 314 pages, \$42.50

De Tocqueville, by Cheryl B. Welch.
Oxford University Press, 294 pages, \$24.95



Welch's volume in the Founders of Modern Political and Social Thought series from Oxford University Press is no elementary introduction to one of the most fascinating students of the modern world. Welch maintains that Tocqueville's "new science of politics" contradicted the powerful post-revolutionary call for social science, which arose precisely in order to explain the French Revolution and its consequences. The irony of her approach is that it focuses our attention on his style, his rhetoric, but not the core of his political philosophy.

Those political concerns become clear in Tocqueville's *Writings on Empire and Slavery*, which contains his reports on Algeria, notes on the Koran, and an essay urging the emancipation of slaves. Here we see the author of *Democracy in America* outlining a sort of *Barbarism in Islam* — and how to civilize it. Jennifer Pitts, the translator of these writings, condemns Tocqueville's defense of French imperialism. But Tocqueville sees civilizing trends in Algeria: "the whole younger generation of Arabs speaks our language, and they have already partly adopted our mores." Noting that Arabs and French serve together in the military, he concludes: "There is, then, no reason to believe that time will not succeed in amalgamating the two races. God is not stopping it; only human deficiencies can stand in its way." But of course political men realize that there is no end to "human deficiencies" — hence the ongoing need for force. Tocqueville may well have underestimated the political nature of man, but not to the extent that these two scholars imply. —KM

ADVICE TO GRADUATES ABOUT ADVICE

by Edward C. Banfield

Edward C. Banfield (1916-1999), author of *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society* and *The Unheavenly City*, among other volumes, was a profound student of American (especially urban) politics and a discerning critic of liberal optimism and self-congratulation. He taught mainly at the University of Chicago and Harvard University. This is a slightly edited version of the commencement speech he gave at Claremont McKenna College on June 6, 1971. In this commencement season, we reprint it as an example of a speech we wish we had heard.



CONVENTION PLACES TWO DUTIES UPON a commencement speaker. The first, which I now discharge with the greatest of pleasure, is to congratulate those who are graduating. In doing so I shall not employ the formula of my own university, which is to "welcome you into the company of educated men," or, as it has very recently become, "the company of educated men and women." I do not believe that there are two companies — the educated and the not — and even if there were I could not be entirely confident of my own credentials to welcome you into the right one. I have no hesitation, however, in saying that insofar as you have entered upon the life of the mind, you — and your parents and teachers as well — have reason to take pride and satisfaction.

My other duty is to give you some advice, and I approach that one with apprehension. A commencement speaker is supposed to know what is wrong with the world, to tell you how to set it right, and to exhort you to do so. Frankly, I am not qualified to do any of these things. Things that appear to others as "crises" often strike me as more or less unavoidable features of a situation that will straighten itself out in time. Most social problems, someone has remarked, cannot be solved in the sense that a puzzle is solved: they may be coped with, or got around, or put up with, but they cannot be solved. Sometimes they have puzzle-like components, but these usually constitute a small, even trivial part of the whole. Besides, we rarely have the knowledge needed to solve such puzzle-like elements of social problems.

And when we tinker with complicated social arrangements (and all social arrangements are endlessly complicated), we run a grave risk of making good matters bad and bad matters worse.

Even if I knew what is wrong with the world and how to set it right, I would be unwilling to exhort you. Our presence here in these gowns is evidence that we are committed to a most egalitarian principle — that of reasonable discussion. For me to try to persuade you of something on other than reasonable grounds would be to violate this principle egregiously. Besides, exhortation is usually a waste of time. What good would it do for me to urge you to be prudent if you are in fact headstrong? You would heed my advice only if you were prudent to begin with.

Perhaps because of the inherent difficulty, if not downright impossibility, of telling the public, or some part of it, what is wrong with the world and how to set it right, most of what passes for advice on public occasions is in my opinion nonsense of one sort or another. I should like to exhibit examples of some of the common, garden varieties.

To begin with, there is the stringing together of mere words — *non-sense* in the strictest sense. I clipped this example from the newspaper the

other day:

Unless we get a strong national commitment that really wants to make the necessary changes we're going to lose this battle. I think this country is doomed.

Never mind who said it or about what. This is what may be called standard *non-sense* of the sort routinely talked by many important people much of the time. How can a "commitment" want to change anything? How indeed can it "want"? And what by the way is a "national commitment"? I know what a constitutional amendment is, or an act of Congress, or a report of the Gallup Poll, or a plank in a party platform, or a statement by the President that he intends to do this or that. But a "national commitment"?

The advantage of words like that is that they mean everything and nothing. The man who said that words were given us to conceal meaning could not have had these in mind, for surely this speaker had no meaning to conceal!

"Doomed" is certainly such a word when applied to the United States. Does it mean that we will be physically obliterated, all of us? Or that we will be annexed to some other country? Or that there will be fighting in the streets — more of it, that is, than usual? Or does it mean that the speaker deplores the social arrangements he thinks likely to prevail 50 or 100 years hence?

One can give advice that is nonsensical but not strictly speaking *non-sense* — merely by talking at an excessively

high level of generality. Consider, for example, the following, taken from *The Recovery of Confidence*, a book by a man [Common Cause founder John W. Gardner] who professes to know, without going before the voters — indeed, precisely because he does not go before them — what constitutes the public interest in all of the most vexed issues of the day. He writes:

In the inner city the police must be in touch with the people and responsive to their anxieties.

That is a good example of nonsense that is not *non-sense*. It contains no absurdities, like "commitments" "wanting" something. Yet it is about as empty of content as any sentence can be. The police, he says, should be "in touch." It is "the people" that they should be in touch with. The police should also be "responsive." That does not mean that they should come quickly when someone phones in a complaint, for it is "anxieties" that they should respond to. I know that at least one of you thinks of becoming a police officer: it is work that calls for men who are enlightened in the way that I trust many of you are. If you join a police force, let us hope that someone — your sergeant, perhaps — tells you just how to be "in touch" with a man who has brutally beaten his wife and children and "responsive" to the "anxieties" of the wife and children, especially if she declines to file a charge against him.

FIGURES OF SPEECH, ESPECIALLY METAPHORS, are peculiarly serviceable to people who give advice about social problems. The use of them tends to create an emotional response in the listener that enhances the urgency of the "problem" thus raising the value of the putative "solution" that the advice-giver offers. I sometimes wonder if we could have an "urban crisis"



without a good supply of metaphors. Suppose that a writer could not speak of “decaying neighborhoods” but instead had to say what he meant straight out — say that the well-off have moved away from aging unfashionable neighborhoods, that this has given the less well-off opportunities to move into housing better than they formerly had, and that they, for obvious reasons, are in most instances disposed to spend less on the repair and maintenance of houses than the former occupiers were. Or suppose that a United States Senator instead of saying, as one recently did, that “the cities are mortally sick and getting sicker” and that the “states are in a state of chronic crisis” had to speak plainly — in this instance, perhaps, to say that although in the last decade the cities and states have increased their revenues by a factor of three, there are nevertheless many voters who would like to have more spent, provided of course that the taxes are paid mainly by others.

A tried and true technique of the advice-giver is to restate a problem so as to make it sound like a solution. “The best solution in South Africa,” the Archbishop of Canterbury recently told the press, “would be a radical change of policy and the growth of progressive influence.” This, it seems to me, is on a par with saying that the best solution for the problem of alcoholism would be the growth of temperance. Those who write about urban affairs tend to give that sort of advice. The author of *The Recovery of Confidence* writes, apropos of the fiscal problems of the cities:

...leaders must have the courage to propose — and citizens the vision to support — appropriate tax measures.

He also says, almost in the same breath, that leaders do *not* have that courage. It is the politician’s lack of guts, as much as anything, he says, that *constitutes* the fiscal problem. It puzzles me how an author could prescribe as a “solution” something the lack of which he maintains is the *cause* of the problem.

FREQUENTLY THE ADVICE-GIVER LAYS down a thick fog of moralizing behind which he performs his magic. By “moralizing” I do not mean giving any advice as to what is right and wrong; there is nothing to criticize in that. What I mean is advocating, as a basis of action, moral principles which cannot be applied as criteria for choice in the concrete situation in which the action has to be taken or which cannot, by themselves, be the basis of decision. The moralizer averts his gaze from those features of the real situation that constitute the problem and then proceeds unembarrassedly to say how one ought to act. The author of *The Recovery of Confidence*, for example, says that we should build 110 new cities, adding:

Cities, I would specify, that relegate to history the outworn nonsense of residential segregation.

Now the sad fact is that, although there are not nearly as many bigots as there used to be, there are more than enough to make the building of 110 unsegregated cities — or even of one sizeable one — a political impossibility for the foreseeable future. What, I wonder, can be the point of pretending that this is not the case — of giving the impression that only lack of imagination or good intention prevents the government from building those new cities? Does the moralizer really mean to maintain that the government ought to do what he well knows it cannot possibly do?

One of the signs that a moralizer is at work is a profusion of “musts.” Must is a word that works wonders in engendering confusion about whether one is talking about what ought to be or about what is or is probable. I quote again from the same source:

We must soon have metropolitan or regional agencies empowered to plan and act for all modes of transportation.

Does the author mean that such agencies are inevitable? Both state-

ments allege a fact or at any rate a judgment of probability. But perhaps what he means — I feel pretty sure that this is the case — is that he would prefer a centrally planned transportation system to one such as we have now. If this is what he means — if he is expressing a value judgment rather than a factual one, why does he use the ambiguous term “must?” I am afraid that the answer is that he uses it precisely because he wants to confuse matters.

I have noticed that people who give silly or nonsensical advice about public questions go to great lengths to be “constructive.” When they say that the country is doomed, they take care to leave a trail of “ifs” leading to a “solution,” albeit very likely one that is absurd or idiotic. To illustrate, I draw this time on a recent work by former Attorney General of the United States [Ramsey Clark] titled *Crime in America*. In the first paragraph the author lays it down that,

Crime reflects the character of the people. This is the painful fact that we do not want to face. Other premises are easier to accept, other causes easier to control. There is no simple reform for defective character.

You might suppose from this beginning that it would be impossible for the author to reach a conclusion in any way encouraging. Not so. At the end of the book, in the epilogue in fact, he gives us a fair amount of encouragement.

With vision, courage and compassion, America can unleash forces that will bring us through....

Need I ask the obvious, awkward question? If our problem is a defective national character, is it at all likely that we shall unleash the forces that have been leashed by the defective character — and the unleashing of which is necessary to its improvement?

Essentially the same question was posed three-quarters of a century ago by William Graham Sumner who asked, “How can we get bad legislators to pass a law which shall hinder bad legislators from passing a bad law?”

IF I WERE AN ADVICE-GIVER (THAT IS, PROPERLY qualified for my present role) I would tell you that one of the world’s troubles is that too much nonsense is talked about public matters — the “crisis” of too much nonsense, I would call it. The solution, I would say, is for people to talk about public matters only when they have something sensible to say — for them to be more reflective, more aware of the complexity of things — in a word, more *serious*. Then I would urge you to go forth and lead the fight against nonsense. With faith, vision, and hope, I would say — and the expenditure of “massive” sums by the government — the amount of nonsense talked about public affairs in this country can be reduced to tolerable levels within a few years.

But, as you will realize, I cannot say any of those things. Nonsensical talk does a great deal of harm, I am convinced of that — but it does not constitute a “crisis.” Indeed it has its good side — values that we all cherish are inseparable from it. If talking nonsense exposed one to ridicule or to some other heavy penalty, many people with a right to feel important would not get to exercise that right; democracy as we know it would be at an end. Besides, the talking of nonsense is inevitable — any “solution” to the problem is itself nonsense.

The talkers of nonsense are mostly people who have some sound reason of their own for talking or else cannot tell the difference between sense and nonsense. As for advising you to crusade against it, that would be an impertinence on my part — and bad advice, too, for it is only by listening patiently to a great deal of it and by producing a great deal of your own that you are likely to get very far in the world. Something I hope and trust you will, if that is what you want.

ON WINE

by Benjamin Franklin

A letter from the Abbé Franklin to the Abbé Morellet (ca. 1779)

YOU HAVE OFTEN ENLIVENED ME, my dear friend, by your excellent drinking songs; in return, I beg to edify you by some Christian, moral, and philosophical reflections upon the same subject.

In vino veritas, says the wise man, — *Truth is in wine*. Before the days of Noah, then, men, having nothing but water to drink, could not discover the truth. Thus they went astray, became abominably wicked, and were justly exterminated by water, which they loved to drink.

The good man Noah, seeing that through this pernicious beverage all his contemporaries had perished, took it in aversion; and to quench his thirst God created the vine, and revealed to him the means of converting his fruit into wine. By means of this liquor he discovered numberless important truths; so that ever since this time the word to divine has been in common use, signifying originally, *to discover by means of WINE (VIN)*. Thus the patriarch Joseph took upon himself to *divine* by means of a cup or glass of wine, a liquor which obtained this name to show that it was not of human but *divine* invention (another proof of the *antiquity* of the French language, in opposition to M. Gébeline); nay, since that time, all things of peculiar excellence, even the Deities themselves, have been called *Divine* or *Divinities*.

We hear of the conversion of water into wine at the marriage in Cana as of a miracle. But this conversion is, through the goodness of God, made every day before our eyes. Behold the rain which descends from heaven upon our vineyards; there it enters the roots of the vines, to be changed into wine; a constant proof that God loves us, and loves to see us happy. The miracle in question was only performed to hasten the operation, under circumstances of present necessity, which required it.

It is true that God has also instructed man to reduce wine into water. But into what sort of water? — *Water of Life (Eau de Vie)*. And this, that man may be able upon occasion to perform the miracle of Cana, and convert common water into that excellent species of wine which we call *punch*.

My Christian brother, be kind and benevolent like God, and do not spoil his good drink.

He made wine to gladden the heart of man; do not, therefore when at the table you see your neighbor pour wine into his glass, be eager to mingle water with it. Why would you drown *truth*? It is probable that your neighbor knows better than you what suits him. Perhaps he does not like water; perhaps he would only put in a few drops for fashion's sake; perhaps

he does not wish any one to observe how little he puts in his glass. Do not, then, offer water, except to children; 'tis a mistaken piece of politeness, and often very inconvenient. I give you this hint as a man of the world; and I will finish as I began, like a good Christian, in making a religious observation of high importance, taken from the Holy Scriptures. I mean that the apostle Paul counselled Timothy very seriously to put wine into his water for the sake of his health; but that not one of the apostles or holy fathers ever recommended *putting water into wine*.

P.S. To confirm still more your piety and gratitude to Divine Providence, reflect upon the situation which it has given to the elbow. You see in animals, who are intended to drink the waters that flow upon the earth, that if they have long legs, they also have a long neck, so that they can get at their drink without kneeling down. But man, who was destined to drink wine, must be able to raise the glass to his mouth. If the elbow had been placed nearer the hand, the part in advance would have been too short to bring the glass up to the mouth; and if it had been placed nearer the shoulder, that part would have been so long that it would have carried the wine far beyond the mouth. But by the actual situation, we are enabled to drink at our

ease, the glass going exactly to the mouth. Let us, then, with glass in hand, adore this benevolent wisdom; — let us adore and drink!

Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) was a printer, inventor, scientist, civic leader, diplomat, founding father, and one of the few men to sign both the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution.



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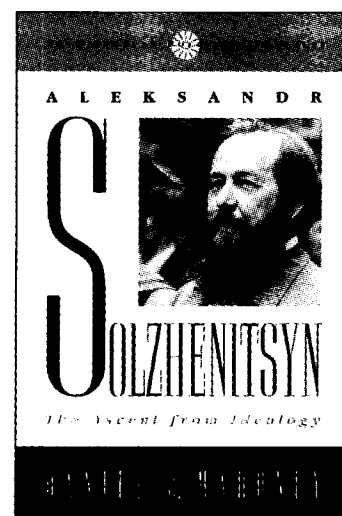
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